

The Honor
of a Lee

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THE HONOR OF A LEE

BY

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DEDICATION.

To my brother-in-law, Dr. John Franklin Spaun-
hurst of Indianapolis, Indiana, to whom I owe a debt
of gratitude, this book is cordially dedicated.

The Author.

THE HONOR OF A LEE

CHAPTER I.

ON a midsummer morning of 1860 two horsemen slowly followed a picturesque road in southeastern Tennessee. That they were strangers in a strange land was apparent from their remarks, for, while they indulged sparingly in conversation, one of them, who had evidently been cast in a finer mould than his companion, commented with enthusiasm on the beauty of the landscape about them or the magnificence of the distant mountain scenery. The other complained garrulously of the glare of the noonday sun or the condition of the highway over which they traveled.

Reaching at length a comparatively level stretch of ground, the latter said a trifle impatiently, "Come, Mr. Philip, let's be riding up a bit. It's a pity not to take advantage of this here delightful shady boolyvard."

"There's no hurry, Tom," the man addressed as Mr. Philip replied quietly, without making the least show of hastening his journey. "If the business outlook here is as promising as the prospect before us we shall not be long in finding a location."

"You've always too great an eye for the looks o' things, Mr. Philip. You'll be marryin' some slip of a lass without a mite o' reason one o' these fine mornin's for the sake o' her bright eye an' her rosy cheek."

"I've held my own against such wiles for eight and twenty years, Tom, I shall probably be able to manage a while longer," Mr. Philip returned good-naturedly.

The two rode on in silence for a few minutes until,

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coming to the brow of a long hill, they obtained a full view of a fine old southern home standing far back among a grove of splendid trees and surrounded by clusters of negro cabins, barns and other outbuildings.

"What an ideal place," Mr. Philip exclaimed, drawing his horse to a sudden halt that he might dwell upon the scene.

"It's fine, I'm compelled to admit," Tom answered reluctantly. "You'd ride many a mile in Yankeedom before you found the like o' this."

"With us it's different, though," Mr. Philip said with a thoughtful air, half jealous that even his man should contrast his native state to its disparagement with any other spot on earth. "At home the towns are the all-important thing while here the plantation owner is the only aristocrat."

With this the master, for such he evidently was, continued his way, much to the satisfaction of his companion who bore the unmistakable air which over-indulgence develops even in a valuable servant. Leisurely they descended the long slope, losing, at length, their view of the plantation buildings; even more leisurely they climbed the more insignificant elevation before them. As they approached the top of the hill, the great house and its surroundings again came within their line of vision, revealing, now, many admirable details not discernible from their former station.

There was nothing very unusual about the large old-fashioned house resting contentedly on the crest of a long hill. It was so exactly like the type to which it belonged that the traveler suddenly set down before it would have recognized his whereabouts as readily as if "Dixie" had been emblazoned in glowing letters across its portal. There was the broad "gallery" with its lofty columns lifted far above the balconies upon which the windows of

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the second story opened; the wide hall with rooms on either side; and the long "L" flanked by a back porch of delightfully ample dimensions. The house was half hidden by stately trees dotted over the broad sloping lawn around whose base wound the highway, lost immediately on the left by a sharp curve, but visible on the right for more than a mile away as it rose and fell with a succession of hills, each towering somewhat above its predecessor and giving the impression of a stupendous line of terraces designed and wrought by a Master Builder. An air of permanence was the characteristic feature of the scene. The hills, the trees, the house itself, suggested a yesterday, to-day and forever feeling, very comfortable to one who has crossed over into the shady side of life and begun already to realize the fleeting nature of things terrestrial.

"Think you, Mr. Philip, that over yonder is the house we're after findin'?" the servant asked with a jerk of his head in the direction of the miniature village.

"I'm sure of it," was the quick rejoinder. "It answers perfectly the description given us in the village, a description, by the way, not overdrawn, as I was confident it had been when I heard it."

They were nearing their destination now, for, having once more reached level ground, the road bore to the right, following for a little way the base of the hill upon whose summit stood the great house, passing, at length, the massive gateway to the lawn which now as usual, stood open, offering generous hospitality to every passer-by.

A young girl who sat swinging back and forth in a low easy chair on the veranda, her open book turned carelessly upside down in her lap, her hands clasped idly behind her head, had sighted the travelers as they halted on the top of the distant hill. Dreamily she watched the progress

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of their journey until they disappeared behind the hither hill, her mind intent upon the book she had been reading.

"What an insufferable lot of stuff and nonsense! I almost wish I had adhered to my original purpose of letting the book alone," she burst forth, forgetting absolutely the existence of the horsemen as soon as they were out of sight. The remark was half soliloquy, half by way of address to her pretty cousin who sat just inside the parlor window.

"What's stuff and nonsense, Virginia?" a girlish voice inquired.

"This Uncle Tom's Cabin we have heard so much about," the first speaker said in a positive tone.

"Do you think so?" came in innocent surprise from behind the long lace curtains. "Why, I read it last summer and it seemed to me a very pathetic tale."

"It's pathetic enough, but it isn't true," Virginia answered.

"Oh! but novels are never *true*, you know, Virginia," the girlish voice ventured a trifle timidly.

"Pshaw! what a little goose you are, Kittie! Of course I don't mean the story isn't true. I mean the situations are overdrawn and the prevailing conditions down here are grossly misrepresented. This woman knows no more about slavery and the southern people and their manner of life than Queen Victoria does."

"Now you speak of it, I think myself the thing was a little overdone. But then, one can imagine such things happening, you know."

"I can't," was the hasty reply. "Who ever heard of or imagined a darky like Eliza or George Harris? I tell you Kittie, the whole thing, from start to finish, is a gross exaggeration of the evils of slavery and it was never written for the mere sake of the story but to stir up a furor against us in the North."

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"Do you really suppose so, Virginia?" answered Kittie, who was always ready to follow the lead of her cousin's stronger personality. "Then of course I do not like it. Why cannot the people at the North manage their own affairs and leave us to manage ours? I'm sure we are very capable of doing so."

"Because they are a detestable lot," Virginia replied scornfully. "For hide-bound prejudice and consummate self-conceit and self-righteousness a Yankee would bear off the palm over all the earth."

During the conversation Virginia had noted the re-appearance of the travelers on the hill, but so absorbed was she that she had scarcely heeded their approach along the highway, nor did she change her attitude even when they entered the gate and came slowly up the drive. A visitor was never, at any hour, an object of curiosity here.

Within a few yards of the house the master dismounted and, handing his rein to the servant, walked to the veranda steps and stood waiting with uncovered head for the approach of Virginia who had risen as she finished her last remark and advanced to meet him. He was just in time to hear the remark of Kittie, sung out in elevated tones, as she noticed the departure of her cousin without being aware of the new arrival.

"One would think you were thoroughly versed in the characteristics of Yankees, Virginia, the assurance with which you pass judgment upon them."

Virginia's face grew rosy as a momentary flash which was a sort of invisible smile passed over the countenance of the stranger. Immediately the expression vanished and, deporting himself with polite dignity, the young man said:

"Is this the home of Mr. Thomas Lee?"

"It is, yes, sir," Virginia replied smiling, ridding her-

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self of her embarrassment as suddenly as the visitor had dismissed his amusement.

"Is Mr. Lee at home?" the inquisitor continued.

"He is on the plantation, yes, sir, but he is not in the house just now. He went to a distant field early this morning and has not yet returned," Virginia explained.

Philip hesitated a moment before asking, "Do I have the honor of addressing Miss Lee?"

"You do. Mr. Thomas Lee is my father." There was almost a touch of pride in the girl's manner as she made this brief reply. The name of Lee was one of life's blessings which she greatly cherished.

"Indeed!" Philip said in a cordial tone. "I am pleased to meet you, Miss Lee. My name is Blair and I bear with me a letter of introduction to your father from a friend of his in the North."

Again the pleased expression beamed in the man's grey eyes, evincing an answering flash from Virginia, who, nevertheless, lost none of her self possession as she replied:

"Come up, Mr. Blair, will you not, and be seated here in the cool breeze. You must have had a warm ride this morning."

Blair thanked her courteously as he proceeded to accept the invitation, while the young lady continued:

"If your business is pressing I can send a messenger for my father and he will come at once, but as he will certainly be in at noon and it is too near that time for you to leave until you have had your dinner, you may as well content yourself here in the shade until he returns."

Upon this she called to the leader of the woolly-headed troop who had been turning somersaults on the side lawn but who now stood watching with wide eyes the movements of the stranger. "Here, Jake, call Sam to take the gentleman's horses to the barn."

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"You are very kind, Miss Lee," Blair said with a ring of genuine appreciation in his voice. "The reputed hospitality of the Southerner I find to be no fable."

"I cannot understand, Mr. Blair, how even the Northerner could do less than ask a traveler who stops at his door at noonday to tarry until he has had his dinner," Virginia replied.

"You have never been in the North, Miss Lee?" Blair said with a rising inflection.

"No, I have never been in the North."

"We mean no harm by our reserve, it is our nature. Our entire manner of life is different from yours," the young man said, as if compelled to assume the defensive for the sake of his own State.

"I gather from your remarks and from your speech and manner that you are from the North, Mr. Blair?" Virginia asked.

"Yes, I have always lived in Rochester, New York."

"Ah! New York? Well, you might have done worse. Only Massachusetts is utterly beyond endurance," Virginia replied in a tone that was half apologetic and with a rare smile that would have allayed a much stronger prejudice than a speech like Kittie's could arouse.

"Thank heaven for the auspicious horoscope that decreed my birth to the west of the Hudson River," Philip ejaculated fervently. "However," he continued without pausing for a reply, "the fates have not been equally kind, I fear, in fixing the moment of my first introduction to your ladyship."

As he spoke he glanced significantly at the book which Virginia still held. Following the glance, she observed the title standing out in bold relief against the dark green of the binding.

Raising her eyes once more to the visitor's face, she said with the engaging frankness characteristic of her

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conversation, "It isn't a particularly soothing tale, is it? Especially should one entertain an unfortunate prejudice in favor of fairness." Then looking from the guest to the bevy of pickaninnies who had returned to their gambols on the side lawn, she continued, "There is nothing so very suggestive of oppression in the faces and actions of those little darkies out there, now, do you think so?"

All the prejudices of a long line of Puritan ancestors against an odious institution, all the preconceived notions of the Northerner regarding the oppression of the negro on the plantations of the South, were warring in Philip Blair's mind, but the searching blue eyes that were once more turned full upon his face put the whole force to rout and he capitulated.

"On the contrary, I shouldn't know where to look for a happier lot of children, I am very sure," he returned pleasantly. "I have been enchanted with the place and its surroundings from my first view of it from the hills yonder."

Mollified by the evident sincerity in the stranger's tone, Virginia was glad to accept the truce and retreat from hostile ground.

"You are adept at pouring oil on troubled water, Mr. Blair," she hastened to say. "Someone in the village must have enlightened you as to my vulnerable point. I am very fond of my home and it always pleases me to hear it praised. It is a sort of 'love me, love my dog' attachment, you understand. To appreciate it fully, however, you must see the view from the door of the little summer house out there."

"I shall certainly look forward to enjoying that pleasure before I leave, Miss Lee," Blair answered. "But speaking of leaving, I assure you it will seem but a prosaic existence to go back to the ordinary walks of life after having had this glimpse of one of its most poetic phases."

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"The important lesson that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well, is thoroughly inculcated in the North, I see, Mr. Blair," Virginia said with a twinkle of merriment in her eye.

"You are laughing at me now, Miss Lee, and with some justice, too, I admit. I have allowed my enthusiasm to betray me into a ridiculous profusion," Blair returned jestingly, adding, with another glance at the book in Virginia's lap, "but the occasion is a critical one and I felt it necessary to resort to extreme measures in order to meet it successfully."

"Ah! you were but rising to the occasion then, I am to understand?" Virginia said interrogatively.

"Not exactly that, Miss Lee," Blair replied quickly. "I assure you I found the ascent very easy for, in all frankness, I am simply charmed with the scenery here and I never saw a more ideal spot for a home."

For some minutes Philip had noticed a young man galloping along the road he had, himself, so lately traveled. The rider, who was evidently of the fine gallant type, now came dashing up the drive and, reining his handsome chestnut sorrel alongside the porch near where Virginia sat, tossed a package of letters and papers into her lap.

"There, Virginia," he said gaily, "I should think that supply would furnish entertainment for the whole family for a week to come."

"Thank you, Hugh," Virginia replied. "Your frequent trips to the village are a great convenience. We shall miss you sadly when you are gone again. Will you not come in? It is almost dinner time."

"Not to-day, thanks. I promised the Gov'nor to be back by ten o'clock and I've dilly-dallied much too long already. Is Kittie here I have a message for her."

"Yes, I'm here, I'll be out directly," Kittie cried from

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behind the lace curtain where she still busied herself over a dainty bit of embroidery.

"Mr. Cunningham, let me introduce Mr. Blair, from Rochester, New York," Virginia said, during the momentary pause that ensued.

Gathering both reins and whip into his left hand, Hugh raised his hat for an instant and then drawing his horse a trifle nearer, held out his hand to Philip who fully responded to the cordial greeting.

Kittie ran half way down the veranda steps and leaned over the railing with cheeks aflame and long soft curls falling about her neck and shoulders. Acknowledging briefly her introduction to the stranger, she turned her attention with childish eagerness to Hugh, who said:

"I saw Nell Taylor this morning, Kittie, and she asked me to tell you the pattern you spoke of the other day is ready for you and that she will show you how to embroider it if you will come in to the village this afternoon. I told her I was coming in again and would do myself the honor of acting as your protector. Is the arrangement agreeable to you?"

Kittie clapped her little dimpled hands and cried impulsively, "Oh! it will be just fine. I've wanted that pattern for days and days. It will be the making of my new frock to have a collar like that to wear with it. What time can we go, Hugh?"

"Not before three o'clock, I fear, Kittie. I am so late home I can scarcely get around to another trip to the village earlier."

"Will that not keep us away too late?" Kittie demurred. "Mamma's hair would be all turned gray if I should be detained until after dark. What do you think, Virginia?"

"I think it's all imagination that Hugh cannot be back here before three o'clock," Virginia replied, laughing.

"This sense of filial obligation is of sudden development,

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isn't it, Hugh? If you're going back to the village this afternoon, you may as well stop where you are for dinner."

"No, 'pon honor, Virginia, I can't do it," Hugh replied. "I've a letter here for the Gov'nor that he's been looking for these two weeks and I must, at least, go over and carry that to him. But I'll manage some way to get back early, Kittie, so you may be ready as soon as you will," he continued, smiling indulgently upon the rosy, happy face that beamed from the veranda steps.

Kittie's eyes drooped beneath the glance and for a moment the long dark lashes rested against her cheeks. Hugh turned his horse and gave a low whistle that sent him galloping across the lawn, while his good-bye floated gaily back to the veranda.

The vivid glow on Kittie's cheek, the peculiar brightness in her eye, as well as the pretty air of unconcern with which she ventured some commonplace remark to hide her embarrassment, told their own tale. A quick glance of mutual understanding passed between Philip and Virginia as the young girl entered the house and they heard her lithe little feet running swiftly up the stairs to the accompaniment of a merry lay she trilled. Once more the indefinable expression which betokened an inward smile flitted across Blair's grave face and lingered a moment in his grey eyes as he said:

"She's pretty enough to captivate a whole regiment of men."

A sudden burst of hearty laughter attracted the attention of Philip and Virginia to the side lawn where Tom was now entertaining Jake and his followers. There was no mistaking the tall, broad-shouldered, muscular man who had paused to exchange greetings with the Irishman and from whom it was evident the laughter had come.

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Philip and Virginia caught the spirit of the occasion and joined quietly in the merriment.

"Some of Tom's nonsense, I suppose," Blair explained. "He spares no one. He'd sharpen his wits on St. Patrick himself."

Mr. Lee—for he it was, as Philip had rightly conjectured—now left the group and, laughing still and fanning his flushed face with his broad-brimmed hat, came around to the front of the house, giving Philip an opportunity to see for himself what manner of man his host was.

"A veritable gentleman of the old school," was Philip's mental comment, for even the paraphernalia suited to a day among the field hands could not disguise the dignified step and lofty bearing of a typical son of the Old Dominion.

"Father, we have a guest from the North, Mr. Blair, of Rochester, New York," Virginia said by way of introduction.

"Ah! Mr. Blair, this is exactly what I like," Mr. Lee began with a frank smile that caused Philip to look quickly at Virginia to satisfy himself it was not merely a reflection from her own face, so very like it seemed to the smile he had been observing with so much interest for an hour or more. But Mr. Lee was going on. "Visits like this are what we need of all things just now. If we knew each other better we should hear less, both North and South, of these portentous mutterings. You are right welcome, be assured."

"Thank you, Mr. Lee," Philip returned heartily. "I am made to feel so much at home here that a letter of introduction seems almost superfluous, but you will be glad to receive it, I am quite sure, for the writer's sake."

Mr. Lee took the letter held out to him and, looking hastily at the subscription, exclaimed, "From Henry

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Long! It is enough, Mr. Blair. You could bear no surer passport to my favor."

Henry Long had been a school friend of Mr. Lee's long years before at Harvard and—a somewhat unusual thing—they had never quite lost each other. The host read the letter through and then, folding it carefully, put it into his pocket before entering on a long conversation concerning the location of certain mills to be backed by northern capital.

"It is a promising venture, Mr. Blair, there is no doubt as to that," Mr. Lee was saying when Virginia, after a protracted absence, returned to the veranda. She had disappeared immediately after her father's coming and now looked refreshingly cool and tidy and self-possessed in the simple white dress she had donned. Leaning lightly against a massive pillar of the porch, she waited respectfully while Mr. Lee continued:

"There is but one objection that I can think of, and that is the unsettled political status of the country. I might not be unselfish enough to speak so frankly to every man because the advantage these mills would be, not only to myself, but to all this section of Tennessee, is inestimable. To you, however, I speak as I should to Long himself, and I tell you candidly I consider the objection a serious one and well worth considering."

What with the vital importance of the projected scheme to his own financial interest and what with the charming dark-haired girl framed in by the trailing green vines of a sweet-scented honeysuckle heavily laden with white and yellow blossoms, Philip was so distracted as to be in danger of hopelessly losing his mental equilibrium.

"I am sorry to interrupt your conversation, father," Virginia said as Mr. Lee finished speaking, "but it can perhaps be renewed at any time while Dinah refuses to be pacified a minute longer. It is only by the greatest

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exertion I have persuaded her to wait this long. She says, 'Ev'ry mouthful o' dinner'll done be stark col' an' soggy if we wait 'til Marse Lee's had 'is say out!'"

Mr. Lee broke into another of his whole-hearted laughs in which he was joined by Philip.

"Come, Blair," he said as he arose to enter the house, "as Virginia says, the conversation can wait, but dinner, never. Dinah's word is as inexorable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. We have a way of spoiling our blacks that is shocking to many of our neighbors."

"It is not altogether a bad policy, either," Blair replied. "A little judicious indulgence is often the cement which strengthens the bond of union between master and servant."

"I should have bet on you for such a theory, Blair. I saw in that man of yours the earmarks of a liberal use of the cement. He's a regular genius, though, there's no discount on that," said Mr. Lee.

"Yes, Tom's spoiled, I can't deny, but he's faithful unto death, Mr. Lee. I haven't a doubt he'd risk his life any day for my sake," Blair said with a peculiar ring in his voice that touched a sympathetic chord in Virginia's heart, Yankee though he was.

Kittie was already in the dining room and Philip's quick eye noted the careful toilet she had made preparatory to the afternoon's outing.

The guest was duly presented to Mrs. Lee, a trim little body of sprightly address who presided at her table with all the grace and assurance of a mistress who "looketh well to the ways of her household," and, a few minutes later, to Kittie's mother, Mrs. Chester, a woman of the languid, indifferent type so frequently developed in the extreme south.

"Where's Marion?" asked Mr. Lee as the party took

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their seats at the table, glancing at the vacant chair beside Mrs. Chester.

"I don't know, Thomas," Mrs. Chester replied. "I've not had the energy to come downstairs before, and I haven't seen him since he left our room early this morning. What is to become of the people compelled to stay in Atlanta if it's hotter there than here, I'm sure I can't imagine."

"Could you have mustered up courage to come downstairs, you might have suffered less, Aunt Nita," Virginia suggested. "There has been an excellent breeze out on the veranda all morning."

"To which I can also bear witness," Philip added. "I found it delightfully cool and pleasant there after my ride this morning."

"But the flies annoy me so out there!" Mrs. Chester complained. "The exertion of continually defending myself more than counterbalances the effect of the breeze."

"Well, come out after dinner, Aunt Nita, and Sallie shall fan you all afternoon and not allow a fly to come near you," Virginia ventured again.

"No, my dear," Mrs. Chester returned with some emphasis, "I should not expect so menial a service from a Lee's Summit nigger. You spoil your people outrageously, Thomas. It will not be long that a stranger can tell who is master here, you or that privileged character you call your overseer or Webster, here," with a nod in the direction of a dignified old slave who stood behind her brother-in-law's chair.

"I'll spare you the exertion of arguing the point with me, Juanita," Mr. Lee returned good-naturedly. "Indeed, I but a moment ago confessed the fault to Mr. Blair. However, I'll do myself the justice of saying that I have never yet been troubled with a runaway nigger."

"That's a keener home thrust than Uncle Thomas

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realizes, eh, mamma?" said Kittie with a roguish twinkle in her eye as she looked across the table at her mother.

"There you go, Kittie, taking sides against me, as usual, when but for you and your father I should have Hulda with me now," said Mrs. Chester. Then turning to Mrs. Lee, "Hulda, Margaret, is a nigger after my own heart and in my state of health I should never think of leaving her behind, but Kittie and Marion, who never know an ache or pain, cannot appreciate how necessary it is I should have my own servant with me always."

"Why, mamma, I can't think what you mean," Kittie chimed in. "It must be the black and tan puppy you are thinking of. We did object to him as a nuisance, but I'm perfectly certain I heard papa urge you to bring Hulda with you and you said it would be a relief to be rid of her impudence for a month or two."

"Well," said Mrs. Chester, languidly shaving off a goodly slice of golden butter and placing it between the halves of a smoking hot biscuit—Mrs. Chester's appetite was certainly not suggestive of the invalid—"it is immaterial who is at fault in the present situation. The important point is that I shall not soon be found away from home again without Hulda."

No one feeling equal to replying to this declaration, there was a lull in the conversation, during which Mr. Lee found opportunity to repeat his inquiries for Mr. Chester.

"Why, yes, I know where he is," Virginia replied. "He ate his breakfast soon after you ate yours and then took his fishing tackle and a lunch and set out for a whole day along the river."

"Along the river a day like this!" Mrs. Chester exclaimed in dismay. "Only think of the snakes and toads and mosquitoes there! Shakespeare certainly showed his wisdom when he said there's no disputing about tastes."

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Virginia saw Blair raise his eyes and regard Mrs. Chester with changeless countenance for an instant before Kittie exclaimed, "Pray, mamma, if you must indulge yourself in giving both authors and quotations, be a little more accurate as to your connections."

Kittie was fresh from her Latin reader, and its "*De gustibus*" was still sounding in her ears.

Philip's eyes wandered to Virginia's face, and she saw the visionary smile she had so quickly learned to recognize.

"Why, wasn't it Shakespeare who said that?" Mrs. Chester returned with imperturbability. "It doesn't matter, though, the principle is the same, and I am much too frail to tax my mind with non-essentials."

Hoping to turn the conversation to a channel of interest to the guest, Mr. Lee now asked, "Are you fond of fishing, Mr. Blair?"

"Reasonably so, yes, sir, though I am by no means expert at the sport. It is one of the chief forms of recreation with us in Rochester," Blair replied.

"Yes, of course, I had forgotten you were from the lake region. I was about to propose a day on the river while you are with us, but I see there'd be no novelty for you in that," said Mr. Lee.

"I should enjoy nothing better, Mr. Lee, if I had the time," Blair answered, "but my stay in this vicinity is, of necessity, very short, and I shall have to forego all pleasure excursions for the present. Should my plans develop, I shall be here frequently later on, and then, perhaps, I can take advantage of your suggestion."

"You must certainly be staying with us a week," the host remonstrated. "It will take that long to investigate the situation, and you can go back and forth to the village as you find it necessary."

"Thank you, sir," was the reply, "I appreciate your

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kindness, but I must return to the village this afternoon and interview the men whose names you have given me. If I am sufficiently encouraged I may possibly stay over until the first of next week. It was unfortunate I arrived here on Saturday."

"Fortunate for us, Mr. Blair," said Mrs. Lee. "We shall be attending church in the village in the morning and you must return with us for dinner."

"Provided only, Mr. Blair, you are able to possess your soul in patience while the Reverend Halliburton delivers a political homily in the guise of a sermon," Virginia interposed.

"Provided also you are proof against the monotony of a whole day with the Halliburtons," Kittie supplemented. "You haven't forgotten it is their day again, have you Aunt Margaret?" she asked with a pretty grimace.

"No, I had not forgotten," answered Mrs. Lee, smiling.

"If the provisos are all in," said Philip, pausing significantly for a moment, "I shall venture to accept your invitation, Mrs. Lee. 'Forewarned is forearmed,' and I trust I shall be equal to the occasion."

"It strikes me as a very inhospitable arrangement for Mr. Blair to remain in the village over night, Margaret," Mr. Lee interposed. "He will have ample time to attend to his business and come back here for supper."

Blair looked quickly and appealingly at Mrs. Lee, who replied, "Of course, Mr. Blair! How stupid of me not to think of that myself!"

"O, yes," Kittie urged, "that will be the very thing, and Virginia can come too, and we can all ride together."

Blair looked at Virginia, appealingly now, without doubt. "Will you come with us, Miss Lee?" he asked.

"Yes, I suppose I may as well," Virginia returned, much to the delight of her cousin, who feared Mrs. Chester's opposition to the proposed trip alone with Hugh, for

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Mrs. Chester, along with her other peculiarities, was a stickler for the proprieties.

"And you will come back with us?" Virginia added, inquiringly.

"I think I will," Blair answered. "I am allowing myself to be overwhelmed by obligation, Mrs. Lee, but the temptation is very great, especially as we are in disrepute at the village inn, where Tom thoughtlessly asked the waitress if they furnished capsules to take the butter in."

Mr. Lee threw back his head and laughed. "That's pretty good," he said, "pret-ty good—especially to one who has sampled the butter at that inn."

Philip and Mr. Lee now fell to comparing the relative excellences of bass and trout and catfish, each repeating at intervals an amusing bit of experience in the capture of one or another of the varieties. The discussion lasted until the dessert was ended, when Mr. Lee consulted his watch and rose hastily from the table as he said:

"Excuse me Mr. Blair, I am sorry, but I have an important matter to look after, and must leave you to the ladies for entertainment. To-morrow I hope to see more of you."

"An apology is altogether unnecessary, sir, as I readily adapt myself to a situation of this kind," Philip rejoined.

With the exception of Mrs. Chester, who dragged herself wearily upstairs, the ladies withdrew with Philip to the veranda where Hugh, returning earlier than he had anticipated, found them conversing with the familiarity of old friends.

Virginia ordered the horses to be brought around, and the gay little cavalcade set forth for Chattanooga, Philip taking his place beside Virginia, and Hugh, according to the arrangement of the morning, devoting himself to Kittie, while Tom showed his democratic spirit by falling behind to match his Irish wit with that of Hugh's black man, Jerry.

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CHAPTER II.

Mr. Lee was a Virginian by birth, of the famous family of that name. His father, who held large possessions in southern Virginia, died when Thomas was but three years of age. After a brief widowhood, Mrs. Lee married a Mr. Chester, of Atlanta, Georgia, and was glad to turn over to him the care of the estate and its numerous slaves. Two years later, at the birth of their son, Marion, Mrs. Chester died, leaving her husband as guardian of the two children and custodian of their fortunes.

Mr. Chester, who was fond of travel and a life of ease and pleasure, took the two little boys to his mother in Atlanta, and, arranging their business affairs as well as his own for a long absence, went abroad, where he spent the remainder of his life wandering from place to place in Europe, Egypt, and southern Asia. He died in Rome shortly after his stepson attained his majority and came into possession of his inheritance. The grandmother had full control of the two boys until Thomas Lee was seventeen years of age, when he was sent, in compliance with the terms of his father's will, to Harvard, remaining there until his graduation. His vacations were spent now here, now there, as the newest interest dictated, so that in the sixteen years following his mother's death he was only three times at the old home in Virginia. He was twenty-three when he finally returned thither, either to settle down and repair the ravages of time or to sell the place and make some other disposition of his fortune. Finding the plantation sadly dilapidated by long years of neglect, he chose the latter course. Selling both lands and negroes, he set out to look for a new

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location where he could lay the foundation for a larger and finer estate.

After several months of travel in western Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and northern Georgia, he found himself one bright spring morning, almost by accident, in the little village of Chattanooga. The buoyancy of the atmosphere, the beauty of the fresh young grass and early flowers, the magnificence of the mountain scenery on every side, made an impression which no lover of the beautiful could resist.

At that early day there was much land to be bought at reasonable cost about Chattanooga, and, after careful investigation, Mr. Lee, who was charmed with the surroundings, purchased a large tract a few miles from the village, and at once entered upon its improvement. Negro quarters were constructed, and slaves, carefully selected by himself, were bought and set to work to bring the land as speedily as possible under cultivation. A site for the "great house" was chosen on the sunny side of a long sloping hill, the natural growth of timber was trimmed or cut away, drives and walks were laid out, and trees planted on either side of them or in little groups on the hillside.

All these expenditures made such an inroad on Mr. Lee's resources that he deferred the building of the large home he had planned until he should begin to realize some return from his investment. He built for his immediate use a pretty cottage near the main entrance to the premises, in after years to be called the "Lodge," after the custom transplanted from England to old Virginia homes, and to be occupied by the overseer of the plantation.

While all this was being done in Tennessee, a fair-haired girl, far away in Virginia, was working every day on piles and piles of household linen, quilts, comfortables, and curtains, and making dozens of dainty garments, mar-

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vellous in ruffles and tucks and laces and embroideries, while with every stitch she sewed in a tender thought or an earnest prayer for the happiness of the new life these preparations betokened.

A little more than a year passed before the necessary work on the Tennessee plantation was complete, and then, on one of those "rare" days in June, Mr. Lee brought this same fair girl to be the mistress of the new domain.

Five years sped quickly by. The trees had grown rapidly and were spreading a refreshing shade over the sloping lawn. A permanent dwelling had been built, and the plantation had come to be known far and near as "Lee's Summit," one of the most elegant as well as one of the most hospitable homes in eastern Tennessee. Still no heir appeared to inherit the broad acres and perpetuate the "dynasty" Mr. Lee so fondly hoped to establish. When at last that treasure arrived, it was a little blue-eyed girl whom Mrs. Lee named "Virginia," in loving memory of her native state. There was a wave of disappointment in the hearts of the parents at first, but as they watched her develop month by month and year by year into an unusually handsome and intelligent little maid, they were very proud and fond of her and ceased to long for the son that fate seemed to deny them.

Adjoining Mr. Lee's land on the south was a fine plantation, well cultivated and yielding abundant crops every year. It belonged to Mr. Cunningham, a Northerner, who had purchased it as a speculation. Finding it unprofitable under the supervision of an overseer, he came, himself, "in the forties," with his wife and little son, to live on the place and take care of it. In a few years it became very valuable and productive, although it was never attractive because the buildings were small and the surroundings were plain and uninviting.

Coming as they did from one of the farming districts of

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Ohio where, in those days, every man was "as good as the best," the Cunninghams knew nothing of pride of ancestry, but the Lees were quick to detect the real worth hidden beneath their somewhat unpolished exterior, and a genuine friendship sprang up between the two families. Hugh and Virginia were sworn friends from earliest childhood, and the ultimate union of Lee's Summit and Cunningham's Place was often the subject of pleasantries between the parents of the two children. The passing years gave promise of the fulfillment of this prophetic jesting. Numerous children came to the Christmas gatherings at Lee's Summit or to the summer picnics at the lovely resorts for which the mountains in this region are so famous, but Hugh was unfailing in his attentions to his little playmate. It was always Virginia's sled that he drew up the long hill on those rare occasions when coasting was possible; it was Virginia's apron into which he dropped the finest and ripest cherries; it was for Virginia that he hung the May basket in the spring time and hid the colored eggs at Easter; and it was with her that he divided his store of pecans and chestnuts when fall came. And Virginia? Virginia was an imperious little maid who had an innate belief in the divine right of queens, and she accepted all this devotion graciously, as a little lady should, but without a suspicion that it was more than was justly due her. One day when Hugh appealed to her to prove to their comrades that she was to be his wife when they were grown up, she replied, with a wilful toss of her head:

"When I am grown up I shall marry the nicest man that I know. If you are that man, Hugh, I'll marry you, but if not, I can't do it, of course."

Then seeing Hugh's crestfallen look, she added, "But you probably will be the nicest, Hugh, for you are the

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nicest boy I know now, and I like you better than anybody except father and mother and mammy Lucy."

Thus spring, summer, autumn, winter, chased each other in quick and oft-repeated succession until our little lady could sing the song of "Seven Times Two" and wait for her story which no bell could ring, no bird could sing, nor any human voice foretell, for who but God could know the tale of gloom and disappointment and despair that awaited almost every southern girl of that awful time?

In the meantime Mrs. Cunningham died, leaving in her home a vacant place that could never be filled. Hugh's grief was pitiful, and Virginia, filled with horror at the thought of having no mother, was kinder to him than ever before, giving him a larger share of her sweets or fruit or cake and speaking to him in a tone of quaint tenderness that bespoke the sympathy of her little heart.

At fourteen she was sent to a young ladies' seminary in Richmond, Virginia, while Hugh, three years older, went to William and Mary College. After that came a long break in their association. Hugh's vacations were almost invariably spent in travel or in summer outings with his college friends. By the end of the fourth year, the two had well nigh outgrown their childhood intimacy, notwithstanding they still kept up a somewhat irregular correspondence.

Virginia had grown into a charming young woman who bore herself with such consummate grace one almost forgot her two or three inches of superfluous height. Her eyes were dark blue, so dark, indeed, as to seem almost black at times, growing serious or sad or glad with her varying mood; her hair was blue-black—to match her eyes, she said—wavy and abundant with soft curls escaping here and there to fall on brow or neck; her complexion was of that rare hue, not fair nor dark, but delicate

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and bright, found only with blue eyes and black hair. In short, she was of that happy type of women who grow ever handsomer with advancing years and to whom maternal cares and responsibilities bring only a suggestion of stoutness and an added dignity which render them even more charming than in the bloom of youth. Nor was she intellectually less attractive. To the mature practical sense and judgment which were the outgrowth of the intimate companionship between herself and her father, the four years of experience in Richmond had added that vivacity and wit which a bright mind always acquires through association with others of its kind.

Thus Hugh found her when he returned from school a few weeks before the opening of our story. He, too, had profited by his advantages, and, though he had still another year before him at William and Mary, he had already quite the "air" of the college-bred young man. Indeed, Hugh's aptness in taking on fine manners was rather greater than his ability in feats of intellect. He was pleasing in person and faultlessly dressed on all occasions—what young girls call a "perfect love of a man." To Kittie Chester he was ideal, and in her youthful innocence and candor, she was not able to conceal the state of her unsophisticated little heart during her sojourn at Lee's Summit this eventful summer.

The meeting of Hugh and Virginia, after their long separation, was sincerely cordial and frank, and they soon renewed the old terms of association. He was her ready knight at all social events, and rode over almost every day on some real or fancied errand or to while away a few hours, if not even a pretence of necessity for his coming could be found. Their relation was still as indefinite as in childhood. One evening, soon after his return, Virginia walked with him as far as the Lodge, chatting familiarly of old time experiences while they

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stood waiting for Jerry to bring up the horses. Taking her hand to say good-night, an unwonted seriousness stole into Hugh's face, as he said with more than usual earnestness:

"Well, Virginia, what do you think of me, am I the nicest man you know?"

The question was so sudden and so pointed that a blush spread over her face and an expression of surprise came into her eyes for a moment; but she answered frankly, "Why, yes, I don't know but you are, Hugh. But then, you see," she hastened to add, "I know so few men. There was Harry Carter who came with you from college that first summer. He was good looking—rather handsome, in fact—but I didn't like him very well, and, besides, he could scarcely be called a man then and I have not seen him since."

"O, you wouldn't care for him. He fell into disgrace and was expelled from college long ago, and none of us ever heard from him again."

"Then there were two or three young men that I met while I was at school, but I didn't know any one of them well enough to decide how 'nice' he was. And, oh! yes, there was Mr. Whitney, of Richmond, he is the very nicest man I know."

"Eli?" Hugh asked, laughingly.

"No, not Eli," she replied. "Not so antiquated! as Eli, and then, besides, of course I do not think a Yankee the nicest man that I know. Mr. Whitney was married, though. He was brother-in-law to one of the girls at school, and his wife sometimes invited her sister and some of her friends out to spend Sunday at their home. We were delighted to go, and all the girls were fond of Mr. Whitney. But you know girls always say that all the really 'nice' men are married."

Virginia was talking somewhat at random now, in an

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effort to change the subject or gain a little time, for, with all Hugh's lightness of speech, she discerned a certain intensity in his manner which warned her that a critical moment was at hand, and she was by no means ready for it.

But Hugh was, for once, not to be diverted from his purpose.

"Then if Mr. Whitney is married he doesn't count, does he?" he asked with more persistency.

"Not for a beau, of course not," she answered.

"Do you remember one day when we were little, telling me that when we were grown up, if I were the 'nicest' man you knew you would marry me?" Hugh asked pointedly.

"No, I do not remember the occasion, but I probably said it, for I remember that, in my egotism, was always my attitude toward the question," Virginia replied.

"Do you mean to keep your promise?"

"It is scarcely fair to call it a promise, Hugh. You know I am conscientious about *promises*. Besides that, I am not sufficiently 'grown up' to decide yet. I have had no opportunity to see the world and to know men, and how can I compare you with others? I must have a few years of experience before I decide. In the meantime, who knows what may happen to your own view of the subject?"

"Time will not change me. I have had my heart set upon you all these years, and I will content myself the best I can until you are ready to announce your final decision." If this sounded the least bit like a complaint it was only in the words, for he spoke pleasantly, and motioned, as he did so, for Jerry, who stood holding the horses at a short distance, to bring them up. Bidding his companion good-bye, he mounted and rode away, Jerry following a little behind him and grumbling quietly because "Marse Hugh done call fo' 'is hoss so long 'go an' den keep me stannin' "

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'roun' waitin' when might's well ben talkin' to Sallie all dat time."

Virginia walked slowly toward the house, secretly gratified that matters were so easily and satisfactorily adjusted for the present.

After the coming of the Chesters, Lee's Summit was gay with the voices of merry revelers, for Kittie was of a fun-loving nature and was just now in that early dawn which precedes the full glow of young-ladyhood, when every social gathering develops, someway, into a frolic. In the midst of these festivities Hugh found no opportunity to press his suit even had he been inclined to do so, and Virginia was glad of a respite from a subject which she had hitherto thought of as belonging to the far distant future.

With his half dozen years or so the advantage of Kittie, Hugh—between whom and any other girl Virginia always stood—could not justly realize the dignity that properly attaches to sweet sixteen, and he petted and spoiled the little beauty in much the same way he had been used to in their childhood, and Kittie, for some unaccountable reason, found him vastly more delightful than the most popular beaux of Atlanta, to say nothing of the simple country swains of Chattanooga and the neighboring plantations.

This brief retrospect brings us to the day when our story opens with the arrival of Philip Blair at Lee's Summit and, together with the deceptive circumstances attendant upon his introduction to Hugh and Kittie, explains the mistake into which he very naturally fell with reference to the relation existing between them.

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CHAPTER III.

HAVING only recently heard a young lady of exquisite literary taste denounce a popular novel because its people were forever eating, eating, as if the *summum bonum* of existence were the feeding of the animal, it is with a spirit becomingly apologetic that we so soon again ask the reader to be one of a dinner party at Lee's Summit. And yet, we may as well give warning in the outset to anyone who is excessively spiritual that there must be a deal of eating going on in a household of which Mrs. Lee is the presiding genius. Of this fact a single glance into her cellars and pantries would be sufficiently convincing.

A party of strangely diverse and opposite opinions, this, assembled about the long dining table at Lee's Summit for the two o'clock Sunday dinner. First—out of deference to the cloth if not to its present representative—there was the Reverend Halliburton, austere of manner, vindictive of countenance, with his wife, also austere of manner, vindictive of countenance. Indeed, Mrs. Halliburton had, in their twenty-five years of connubial bliss, so formed herself upon her husband that when she spoke one involuntarily exclaimed with Gabriel, "'Tis but the echo." There was Mr. Chester, a wiry, fiery little gentleman of the sanguine type and temperament; Mrs. Chester, with whom the reader is doubtless sufficiently acquainted but with whose weaknesses we must perforce bear as patiently as may be from time to time in these pages; and Kittie, sweet little Kittie, so utterly unlike her mother that Philip Blair looked quickly toward the father for verification of the law that like produces like—utterly unlike her father save for the tinge of auburn that Philip

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remembered to have noticed glinting in her curls in the sunlight. There was Hugh Cunningham, the gay and debonair, to whom life thus far had revealed itself simply as a pretty bauble; there was his father, the sturdy, bustling middle-class man of the North who was, in reality, but a graft upon the social order of the South. There were Mr. and Mrs. Lee and Virginia, and Philip Blair, of whose political bias, his birthplace and lifetime residence—Rochester, New York—is strikingly suggestive.

Philip Blair felt peculiarly comfortable and at home among these people for one who, a little more than twenty-four hours before, had knocked at their door, a stranger. In the brief moments during which he stood waiting by his chair until all were assembled at the table and Mr. Halliburton pronounced a pompous grace, his mind flew back over the incidents of his sojourn here. He thought of the warm welcome accorded him for the sake of Mr. Henry Long; of Hugh Cunningham's kindly offices in introducing him to influential men in the village; of the merry party—and here a smile for which even Virginia's penetration could have fathomed no adequate cause flitted across his face as a vision arose before him, a vision of his stately home in the far-off northern city, of his stately sister Alice whose every act conformed to the properest conventionalities, of his handsome gray-haired mother, more stately still than all. The interruption was but momentary, for in an instant he found himself once more among the merry party assembled before Nell Taylor's home when he arrived there, by appointment, at five o'clock the afternoon before, to accompany Hugh and Kittie and Virginia home. Some of the young people were already in their saddles while others waited about the stile for their horses to be brought up. He heard again the happy laughter and friendly

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greetings as he was introduced all around and felt again the satisfaction with which he fell into line beside Virginia when at last the little procession was under way, tossing a playful remark over his shoulder to Kittie Chester, whose heart, he could well imagine, was going pit-a-pat at prospect of enjoying Hugh's undivided attention for a second time that afternoon.

But now the hush is broken and the dining room is astir with life as family and guests draw back their chairs and seat themselves at the table, while at a sign from Webster his half-dozen dusky helpers are set scurrying hither and yon at their accustomed tasks.

There was no time now for Philip to dwell upon the homeward ride or the little journey to the summit of a hill by the road side from which he could look across the boundary line of four states, could see the broad expanse of the Tennessee River upon the left with Chattanooga nestling on its bank, a long sloping highland to the east which Virginia told him was Missionary Ridge, and the towering height of Lookout Mountain on the south, with hills and valleys and rushing streams between—all destined to become historic ground within half a decade; no time for the laughter and games and dancing during the merry evening that followed or for the songs that Virginia sang in a rich, melodious voice while he stood beside her at the piano and turned her leaves; no time even for the early morning walk in the flower garden or for the moments when he leaned against the door of the little summer house watching the glory that fell upon mountain and hill and stream as the first beams of the rising sun touched them, or for the equal and far more thrilling glory that shone from the sweet, womanly face of the girl beside him—no time for any of these things, for Mr. Halliburton had the floor.

"As I was saying"—that worthy gentleman began as

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he adjusted himself comfortably in his chair, evidently taking up the thread of his discourse where it had been broken off when he was summoned to the dining room—"I made the same remark from my pulpit this morning and you, as well as others of my people, have heard me express the same sentiment on former occasions"—

The reverend gentleman here paused to assure himself by a comprehensive glance around the table that he had the undivided attention of his audience before he continued, "All this hue and cry of the Abolitionists is but an unholy exaltation of their own opinions above the express declarations and commands of Holy Writ. Was it not divinely appointed unto the descendants of Ham that they should serve the race of Japheth?"

"Tut, tut, Mr. Halliburton," interrupted Mr. Chester impatiently, "I never trouble myself to search the scripture for a thing that common sense alone can teach us. Look at the black man—do you suppose the Almighty blackened his skin and thickened his skull and flattened his nose and spread his foot out like a Virginia ham for pastime? I tell you He made the nigger to be subservient to the white man."

"Subserviency doesn't necessarily mean bondage, though, Chester," Mr. Cunningham hastened to object, thereby arousing, unpremeditatedly, a feeling of good-fellowship in the heart of Philip Blair.

"As to that, if there is to be quibbling about terms, do we not read of the bondmen and bondmaidens of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob?" asked Mr. Halliburton in a hear-the-conclusion-of-the-whole-matter tone and manner.

"To be sure!" sanctioned his wife. "I distinctly remember that Hagar was called the bondwoman."

Blair was nettled. Lenient as he was toward slavery

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as exemplified on the Lee plantation, he could not tolerate the narrow bigotry of the Halliburtons.

"We also read of polygamy as the practice of certain other men 'after God's own heart,' but we should hesitate to believe the institution had God's approval simply because it existed," he argued. "Numerous practices were tolerated in the infancy of the race that would not be countenanced in these days of enlightenment."

"There is no denying that the trend of civilization is away from all forms of serfdom and slavery," Mr. Lee returned quickly, thereby intercepting a hasty remark which he saw his brother was about to make. "In the eternal economy of things it seems to be a part of God's plan to give every race a show sooner or later. There is no doubt in my mind that slavery must eventually be abolished in the United States, but it must not be done precipitately. It were an injustice to both master and slave to talk of sudden emancipation here."

"You are right, Mr. Lee," Philip Blair replied earnestly, "and I am glad to assure you that there are thousands of men all over the North who are as conservative as yourself and who stand actively opposed to the extreme measures advocated by the Abolitionists."

"I have often wondered, Mr. Blair, why the Abolitionists should be so bitter against us," said Virginia inquiringly. "When I go down to the quarters of our blacks and see them so much better cared for than if they were thrown on their own helplessness, so far in advance of what they would have been had they been left in the wilds of Africa, I cannot understand how people can say such things of us as we read in many of your publications."

"They don't care a rap for the nigger," Mr. Chester interrupted hotly. "It's a matter of jealousy from start to finish. They tried the thing in the North and found it a

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failure and they're envious of our progress and our prosperity."

Virginia flushed as Philip's grey eyes met hers for an instant in their transit from Mr. Chester to Mr. Lee at the farther end of the table, who, choosing to ignore the sting of his brother's words, stepped into what might have become an unpleasant situation by replying to his daughter's question.

"There is, of course, more cause for censure on some plantations than there is here, Virginia. Do you remember the episode at Anderson Black's that so exasperated you?"

"Do I remember it!" Virginia exclaimed. "Can I ever forget it, is more to the point. It is one of the milestones of life to me."

"I had occasion to make a business trip to a plantation in the western part of the state when Virginia was a little girl and, at her urgent request, I took her with me," Mr. Lee explained. "In the course of our visit, Virginia was playing with the children out by the overseer's house when a slave was brought to him to be punished. The overseer gave him a brutal beating. Virginia, it seems ran to him with flashing eyes and clenched fists and, stamping on the ground, called him a nasty man and threatened to go tell Mr. Black 'if he didn't stop this minute.' Of course the overseer paid no attention. She came flying to the house with angry tears shining in her eyes, shouting breathlessly to Black to come down and stop the thing. When Black finally got at her meaning, he laughed and said, 'You're a pretty little miss when you're mad, but Sambo's a bad nigger and if we didn't round him up occasionally we could not live on the same plantation with him.'"

"To this day my blood boils and I want to do something to somebody every time I think of it," Virginia

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cried indignantly. "The word 'man' has never meant quite the same to me since. There were the overseer and Mr. Black and father, all implicated, it seemed to me, in the tragedy. For, I confess that, in my ignorance, I was even a little indignant that father should sit there like a stone while such a thing went on."

"You see what I mean, though, Virginia," Mr. Lee urged gently. "We must not judge too harshly those who condemn a system which makes such a scene possible."

"But individual instances should not be taken in condemnation of the whole," Virginia remonstrated. "I know a man who prays long and loudly at church and yet he never pays a debt without being sued and he always puts all the big fine apples on the top of the basket when he peddles them in the village—I heard Nell Taylor say it only the other day. You would not, therefore, say Christianity is a farce and a failure, would you?"

"That is scarcely a parallel case, Virginia," Mr. Lee said, smiling, "and I very much fear your individual instances are more numerous than you, perhaps, imagine. You base your idea upon the system as you see it here at home or over at Cunningham Place."

"Anyway, there is more truth than poetry in what Black said," interrupted Mr. Chester. "There is many a nigger that cannot be dealt with any other way but to give him the lash occasionally."

"At least you must admit, Thomas, you are too easy with them here," Mrs. Chester said with a vim which no other subject could have provoked. "For myself, I like those good old days we read about somewhere, when the lord of the manor sent his serfs out to beat the marshes to keep the frogs still while he slept. That always suggests such a comfortable idea of life to me."

"One would wish to be sure which party one would belong to, though, mamma," Kittie tore herself from a

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conversation with Hugh long enough to remark. "Now, you might chance to be one of the serfs and that would be unpleasant, you know."

"I should be one of the aristocracy, of course," Mrs. Chester returned complacently.

"I am not so sure about that," Kittie argued. "There are no grandfathers in America, you know."

"I, at least had a grandfather, as also your Uncle Thomas had," Mrs. Chester declared loftily. There was, in Mrs. Chester's family, an indefinite, but greatly valued, tradition in which the name of Oglethorpe figured among her ancestors and she had a habit of reminding Mr. Chester incidentally now and then of the fact that his progenitors had not been so remotely discernible from the common herd as had her own.

"A Georgian must be careful about tracing ancestry back too far, though, mother mine, lest he find a great-great-grandfather with a barred window on his escutcheon," Kittie retorted.

The laugh which followed relieved Mrs. Chester of the necessity of replying, for which she was truly grateful. Philip was convinced by the vacant look on her face that she had not caught the point of her daughter's witticism.

"Mamma isn't really so severe as she would have you believe," Kittie went on as the laughter subsided. "She bought Hulda—whom she dotes on—because she was whipped by her former mistress."

"Of course," Mrs. Chester answered scornfully. "Respectable families never whip the house servants."

"Respectability is the leading tenet of mamma's creed," Kittie explained banteringly. "She would not be happy in Heaven if she found some one there not of our own set—which is her definition for *dis-respectability*."

Philip was highly entertained by these frequent passages between Mrs. Chester and her daughter and now,

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for several minutes, he had been at 'some ado to keep from losing some thrust of Kittie's and at the same time catch the gist of the more substantial conversation in progress at the other end of the table.

"Do you mean to say, then, that you would be an advocate of secession, Lee?" Mr. Cunningham was asking when it became apparent that Mrs. Chester had, for the time, exhausted her vitality and that Kittie was once more engrossed with Hugh.

Philip was glad now to be relieved of double duty and he listened with much interest for Mr. Lee's reply.

"No-o," that gentleman returned, shaking his head thoughtfully for a moment, "it would be putting it too strongly to say that I would favor secession. I only suggested that as the most plausible solution of the problem. The interests of the North and the South are so absolutely antagonistic that it seems impossible they should ever agree. I consider two governments at peace with each other preferable to an unceasing wrangle under one common government."

"You would not favor secession?" Mr. Halliburton burst forth, the veins of his heavy countenance swelling visibly with his rising resentment. "I cannot conceive how any southern gentlemen of spirit can make such a statement. Are the descendants of Washington and Jefferson and Madison and of your own illustrious ancestors, Mr. Lee, to submit to the yoke of the northern tradesman?"

"And are our slaves, purchased with our own money, to be taken from us while we sit tamely by without so much as our yea or nay being asked?" supplemented Mrs. Halliburton.

"There is no immediate danger of our slaves being taken from us, Mrs. Halliburton," Mr. Lee said calmly. "The day has not come when even a rash man could hope

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to carry through such an undertaking, and Mr. Lincoln, whatever else he may be, is cool-headed and considerate."

"Mr. Lincoln has repeatedly declared that he has no intention of trying and no right to try to emancipate the negro if he should be elected," said Philip Blair. "Even were he inclined to do so, he is too sensible to attempt a measure which would alienate a large and powerful element of this nation."

"Do you mean to say he is not an Abolitionist?" Mr. Chester asked sneeringly.

"Why, yes, I believe I do," Blair answered slowly, weighing his words carefully as he spoke, "at least not in the offensive sense in which the term is often used. He is an anti-slavery man, but not an Abolitionist."

"You draw fine distinctions, Mr. Blair," said Hugh Cunningham with the indifference of one to whom the whole subject is a bore.

"It is a time when fine distinctions are necessary. The question is too important to be dismissed with a few generalizations," Philip replied with a courteous glance at Hugh. Then turning to the host, he continued, "The question of slavery seems not the important one to me, however, Mr. Lee. The right of secession is the real issue before the nation. Slavery is not so much a question of North against South as it is of Anglo-Saxon civilization against an institution of semi-barbarism. If the North will but have patience and the South will reconcile itself to the inevitable fact of which you spoke a moment ago—that all forms of serfdom and slavery are doomed—this difference will, in the very nature of things, right itself in time. But secession once started would know no stopping place. If the cotton growing states may secede, so may New England, the Mississippi Valley, the Pacific coast region, while each group may, in turn, be broken into smaller groups, into states, counties, neigh-

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borhoods. The theory, carried out, is utterly subversive of all government, don't you think?"

The fire of opposition blazed in Virginia's eyes. Blair had unwittingly touched upon the one theory to which she was passionately attached.

"But on the other hand, Mr. Blair, to deny the right of secession is virtually to make slaves of the inhabitants of any section that chances to be in the minority," she argued with a vehemence that pardoned the interruption. "The South has never tried to interfere with the local institutions of the North—all we ask is to be let alone. No more does the North have a right to bind its conscientious scruples upon us. Slavery may be an institution of semi-barbarism—is such, in fact—but it is *here*, and it is a problem not for the North, but for the South, to work out for themselves. Of course, it is harder for us whose fortunes and homes, even, depend upon the continuation of slavery to moralize upon the question than it is for the New Englander to whom its abolition means, personally, so little."

"To be sure, Miss Lee, and that is why I am saying that the more level-headed citizens of the North do not favor interference with your local interests on the part of the national government," Blair replied.

"All that pretty theory is but so much nonsense, Mr. Blair," Mr. Chester interposed. "I know and you know and the whole world knows that the North has made up its mind to free the nigger, and the only way for us to prevent it is to nip the whole thing in the bud by setting up housekeeping for ourselves."

"I object to the right of secession being always based upon the one question of slavery as if it were the paramount consideration," Virginia began before Philip could reply to her uncle. "Suppose the emancipation of the black man to have been accomplished, are there not other

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issues of equally vital importance to us? For instance, having freed the negro, the North might find it to its advantage to enfranchise him, that it might have absolute control of our affairs. Should we submit to such an indignity, do you think, Mr. Blair?"

"Your illustration befogs your argument, Miss Lee," Philip answered laughingly. "There is far greater chance for a restriction of the right of suffrage along intellectual lines than for its extension to an ignorant, illiterate and irresponsible class."

"Well, we'll drop my illustration, then, for I am convinced myself it is too absurd to be considered seriously," Virginia said with a smile that precluded the possibility of personal antagonism, "but is not secession the only way to place ourselves beyond danger of all such catastrophes?"

"Do you know what the secession of the Southern States or any part of them would mean, Miss Lee?" Philip asked earnestly.

"Yes, it would mean two governments bitterly opposed to each other, stagnation of business for a time, and possibly very serious trouble until the North is convinced we are in earnest," Virginia replied.

"It will mean war, *civil war*, not for a short time but, it may be, for years. The South will be determined to win and the North will never give up the Union until every drop of blood and every dollar of revenue are gone." Blair spoke the words solemnly as if in prophecy of the impending storm.

"Then let it come!" cried Mr. Chester who, though quiet for some time, had been wrought up to a white heat by the controversy. "The sooner the question is fought to a finish, the better it will be for both sides. Why should we wait for Mr. Lincoln to attempt the abolition of slavery? The day of the approaching elec-

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tion should decide the course of the Southern States will pursue."

An intensity that threatened to become painful sat upon the countenances of the more serious members of the company until Virginia, perceiving that all were now ready to leave the table, arose with a tragic air and a significant gesture of her arm as she proclaimed:

"Almost methinks I see Regulus flourishing his toga as he cries to the Carthaginians, 'Here in this toga I bring you peace and war, which shall it be?' "

Thus in a burst of laughter and friendly good will, the company dispersed to parlor or veranda or lawn as the fancy of each suggested.

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CHAPTER IV.

“Believe me, if all those endearing young charms
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Were to change by to-morrow and fleet in my arms
Like fairy gifts fading away,
Thou wouldst still be adored as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will,
And around the dear ruins each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.”

The song was Kittie Chester's and it was sung in a soft, purring little voice peculiarly her own as she leaned out over the side of the Lee carriage, listening to the whirr of the wheels bowling rapidly over the river road. Having endured the droning, monotonous tones of the Reverend Halliburton for half the afternoon, she declared she could no longer trust her disposition to stand the strain and persuaded Virginia to order the carriage. Together with Hugh and Philip, they set out on a sight-seeing expedition from which they were now returning. The afternoon had been sultry and the air was still warm and oppressive except for a little distance here and there where a cool breeze floated to them from no one knew where, giving promise of a more tolerable temperature an hour or two later on.

They had talked of the grass and the flowers and the trees, of the majesty of the slow-going river current as it swept round the curve of Moccasin Bend, of the grandeur of Lookout Mountain frowning upon them from the south, of the beauty of the fading sunset, of the full moon rising big and round and red above the eastern

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highlands, and of the thousand and one other subjects of interest to enthusiastic youth.

By and by as conversation lagged, Kittie began humming softly to herself, drifting at length into the words of this little ballad of Tom Moore's. By the time she reached the second verse, Hugh and Virginia had caught the spirit and joined her. Thus encouraged, she continued the singing, ready with some fresh melody almost before the notes of the last had ceased to come back to them from the surrounding hills. The songs were, many of them, new to Philip, for the time had not yet arrived when the popular airs of New York were also the everyday songs of Washington, of New Orleans and of San Francisco, and he enjoyed them along with all the other new things he found in Tennessee.

Tired out at last, Kittie leaned back among the cushions as the carriage wound slowly around the base of the Lee's Summit hill, entered the gateway and rolled up the long drive. A silence had fallen upon the little party now and no sound was heard except the crunching of the gravel beneath the wheels, Sam on the box whistling softly to himself the notes of the last air that had been sung, and the hum of busy voices, varied now and then by a loud shout, from the direction of the negro quarters.

"I wonder if you people who are accustomed to it, appreciate your life down here?" Blair said, breaking the silence impulsively. "We have no conception of such an existence in the North. Our men are hustling and pushing and scheming to raise their financial rating a few notches higher each year than it was the year before and our sisters and mothers are either hustling and pushing and scheming to raise themselves a few notches higher in the social world, or, having reached the top, are so hemmed about and hampered by social restrictions and conventionalities that there is no opportunity for that

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larger, freer development that is open to you here. I have thought many times to-day, Miss Lee, of that little party of yours last night, arranged on the spur of the moment without so much as a word to your mother about it, and I smile to myself as I compare it with one of my sister Alice's receptions."

"You have a sister?" Virginia asked quickly with a display of interest that struck Hugh as rather uncalled for.

"Yes, I have a sister, a little older than yourself, I should say, and a widowed mother. My father died almost ten years ago," Philip answered with the touch of sadness that always came into his voice when he spoke of his father. "They are loving and loyal and considerate—my mother and sister are—but they are reserved, I think that is the way to put it. I never realized it so thoroughly as I have since yesterday. Why, when Alice entertains, the thing is talked of for weeks if it is an event of any consequence. Mother is consulted on every minutest detail. Long lists of guests are made and revised, the menu is arranged and changed again and again, the house is decorated all over with flowers and then, when all is ready, it would start the cold chills creeping all over you to see the dignity with which Alice and mother—and perhaps an assistant or two—stand for hours inside the drawing-room door to receive the equally stately and dignified guests."

"Oh! but that's because you live in a town, Mr. Blair. I utterly abominate towns!" cried Kittie. "We do things more like that in Atlanta than they do here at Uncle Thomas's. Mamma imagines that way of giving parties more aristocratic than what she calls Aunt Margaret's haphazard fashion, and if mamma is anything in life she is aristocratic, you know. For myself, I greatly prefer Aunt Margaret's way. In fact, I often think mamma

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mistakes being cool to people for being aristocratic. I could live forever at Lee's Summit and be happy."

"And I, too, Kittie," Philip returned. "Someway this kind of life seems to bring out the very best there is in a man."

"I often tell them at home how perfectly heavenly it is here, and that the very happiest, happiest days of my life are the vacations I get to spend out here." Kittie was at the superlative age. Her very extravagance softened the New York reserve with which even Philip Blair was perceptibly tainted and he smiled indulgently at her enthusiasm.

"I fear you must think us exceedingly primitive here, Mr. Blair," Virginia said, laughing as she recalled the free hand with which the party of the evening before had been collected, the hilarity that had pervaded everything they did, and Philip's look of concern when he found that her mother had had no word of their coming.

"If by primitive you mean genuine and natural, I assuredly do find you so, Miss Lee, and the discovery is most refreshing," Blair answered.

"Thank you, Mr. Blair," Virginia returned in what Blair all along described to himself as the most musical voice he ever heard. "Father always says the appreciation of a manner of life wholly at variance with our own is sure proof of a generous nature and I have always found what father says to be true."

"I shall endeavor not to disappoint you as you learn my nature better," Blair answered, adding lightly, "but while we are on the subject, I should like to ask you, Miss Lee, what assurance you had yesterday that it would be convenient for you to take a regular party home with you just at supper time?"

"Oh, I knew the house would be there and the lawn there, and I know father and mother always make any

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one welcome that I choose to invite to our home," Virginia replied.

"But there must be something for such a party to eat, how did you know that necessity would be provided for? I do not wish to seem inquisitive, but candidly, I am curious to know how you manage these things down here," Blair said so frankly that Virginia could only smile as she replied:

"Well, there are always apples and peaches and pears and berries—and watermelons, if nothing more—and mother has always such stores of good things in the cellar and, especially on Saturday, Dinah has the most astonishing lot of baking put away in the pantry, and—well, to tell the truth, Mr. Blair I never think about that part at all. We always have been provided for when I bring my friends home with me and I suppose I take it for granted we always shall be."

Sam, who a few minutes before, had stopped the carriage not far from the veranda steps, waited for the young people to finish their conversation and alight.

"Sam," Hugh called as he handed Kittie from the carriage, "if you see Jerry anywhere about, tell him to bring the horses here in about an hour. If I don't stop bringing him over here to loaf with you Lee's Summit nigs, he'll be so trifling I'll never get him broken into service again and he'll have Sallie so spoiled she will be of no kind of use to her mistress."

"That's a problem that confronts a man the world over, I suppose," Blair said laughingly. "It's my worst complaint against Tom Healy. He's like a balky horse if there's a pretty maid in sight."

"Where is he, Mr. Blair?" Virginia asked. "I meant to inquire about him yesterday evening but in the commotion, I forgot it."

"Oh, he made up his little difference with the waitress,

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who proved to be the innkeeper's daughter," Philip answered. "The last I saw of him he was begging her to accept a sack of sweets as a peace offering and he called to me to go on to Lee's Summit and said he would come out some time to-day. I suppose he found the maid so enticing he could not tear himself away."

Seated in the shadow of a huge pillar, Tom Healy overheard Blair's words. A suggestive grin that betokened a determination to be even, overspread his countenance. The coveted opportunity came sooner than he had anticipated. Philip, turning on the steps to answer some remark of Kittie's, stumbled over Tom's extended foot before he had otherwise any intimation of his presence.

"Beg pardon, sure, Mr. Philip," Tom began apologetically, rising quickly. "It was careless o' me to have my foot stickin' out like that, but how could I know where you was a goin' to step an' you a tryin' to look at two han'some young ladies at the same time? You mind me o' that story about ol' Judge Warren."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Lee who, deserted by the guests, sat with his wife on the veranda and who had already learned enough of Tom to be glad of an opportunity to draw him out.

"Judge Warren," Tom responded readily, "is a fine ol' gentleman back in N'York State, a justice o' the peace, who has the misfortune to be cross-eyed. Mike Flannigan is a rough ol' weather-beat sailor in Rochester—one o' these here awk'ard men that has trouble with their locomotive organs, one foot always seemin' to say to t'other, 'If you'll let me pass this time I'll let you pass next time,' you understand. Well, one windy March day Mike was a forgin' along with his head down, sorter buttin' the air to make way fer 'is body, when he runs into the well-developed front of the cross-eyed ol' Judge.

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'Hey there!' cries out Judge Warren, indignant to think he should be put upon by a common run o' shad like Mike Flannigan, 'Why don't you look where you're a goin'?' 'Faith,' Mike yells back, 'an' why don't you go where you're a lookin'?'"

"Tom, you're a knave of the deepest dye," Philip Blair said, laughing at Mr. Lee's enjoyment of Tom's waggish manner rather than at Tom himself, "it was no accident that your foot was sticking out like that, and you know it. A fellow as unprincipled as you are isn't to be trusted out of a man's sight. Where have you been all day and what have you been up to? Nothing good, I'll warrant."

"No, honor bright, Mr. Philip, I ain't done a thing to-day to be ashamed of. You see, the overseer was good enough to ask me to eat dinner down at the Lodge with them to-day an' I promised that pretty little duck at the inn to eat dinner there, an' then there's my 'steady' back in Rochester that always expects to see me on a Sunday afternoon. To split the difference, I spent most o' the day a walkin' up an' down the streets o' Chattanooga an' wishin' I was triplets so I could be here an' there an' back in N'York State all at the same time."

"I'm not much of a physician, Tom, but I can diagnose your case easily enough. You're homesick, old boy, and I think I know a remedy. We'll start for Rochester to-morrow," Philip answered indulgently.

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Mr. Lee and Virginia in the same breath.

"Yes, I think I'll go home to-morrow," Philip answered Virginia first, then turning to Mr. Lee, he continued, "I am convinced that it will be wise to postpone further negotiation about the mills until we know the developments of the next few months and, that being true, my business here is, for the present, at an end."

"That's why I rode out this evenin', sir," said Tom,

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twirling his hat round and round in his hand. "I thought like as not you'd want to know that if we make our connections all right for the North we have to get out o' Chattanooga on the five o'clock train to-morrow morning. The agent told me so at the station to-day."

"I see you have the disease badly, Tom," Philip answered, smiling. "It's all right, though, it was very thoughtful of you to look after the trains and come out to tell me. I'll ride back with you to the village this evening."

A chorus of protestation arose from the Lees. "There isn't the least necessity for it," Mrs. Lee insisted. "We always ride in in the morning to take that early train."

Philip looked quickly at Virginia who stood in the path of light that fell across the veranda from the hallway. Catching the look of invitation in her face, he turned to Mrs. Lee with acceptance—as what young man would not?

"Thank you, Mrs. Lee," he said earnestly. "I shall carry back to the North the pleasantest impression of Tennessee and the very fondest, happiest recollections of the Lee household and the generous hospitality that has been shown me here."

"The pleasure has been equally ours, Mr. Blair, and I regret that you have allowed the little unpleasantness that seems to threaten just now, to scare you out," returned Mrs. Lee in her sprightly, good-natured manner. "I do not understand this pessimistic mood of Thomas's. It is usually his fault to look too persistently on the bright side of things. I've no doubt the political horizon will be all clear by spring."

"I trust to God it may be so, Margaret," said Mr. Lee in response to the half bantering tone with which his wife addressed her last remark to himself. "I trust it may be so, but I'm afraid—afraid. You see," turning

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to Blair, "we have so many one-sided men like Halliburton and so many rash, hot-headed men like Marion, it will be hard for the more steady-going among us to hold the balance of power down here."

"I see it, Mr. Lee, I see it plainly now," Philip answered. "In the North we have heard rumors of this secession movement and some of our papers are frantically sounding the alarm but the rank and file of our people are paying very little attention to the cry. The question has come to me in a different light down here and I cannot think of disregarding the advice of a cool-headed man like yourself. I am as grateful to you for your wise counsel as for the kindly welcome to your home. But for you, I might have been rash enough to make large investments here to my own ruin."

"Anyway, you shall not be debarred the hospitality of Lee's Summit, whoever may be president at Washington, Mr. Blair," said Mrs. Lee, cheerily.

"Thank you again, Mrs. Lee. I shall certainly avail myself of your invitation. I should be sorry if a political difference could interfere seriously with a friendship so pleasantly begun," answered Blair.

"Now hie yourselves to the dining room," said Mr. Lee, falling into his usual jovial manner, "and find something to eat. There's nothing like a jaunt over our Tennessee hills to sharpen up the appetite."

"Your lunch is on the table, Virginia," said Mrs. Lee. "We never have supper in regular fashion on Sunday evening, Mr. Blair."

Kittie was in the gayest humor in the dining room, chattering away like the veriest little mappie, notwithstanding the thoughtful mood into which her companions had fallen. Hugh, in spite of himself, was a little disgruntled at the turn affairs had taken, Blair was ill at ease as he revolved the prophetic words of Mr. Lee in his

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mind, while Virginia was, for a time, more or less occupied with the duties of serving even the simple meal.

"We never require the service of the blacks so late on Sunday evening, Mr. Blair," she explained. "The Sunday evening meeting at the quarters is the event of the whole week to them and we wouldn't think of unnecessarily depriving one of them of the pleasure of attending."

She had scarcely finished speaking when a great volume of weird music came up from the negro cabins.

"Yes," she said in answer to Philip's inquiring look, "the prayer meeting has begun. Some time when you are here for a longer visit we'll go down to one of their services. You would be surprised to see how much real feeling is often manifest in their rude worship."

"I am almost ready to build three tabernacles and camp right here for the rest of my life, as it is, Miss Lee. I shouldn't be willing to answer for what I might do if I allowed myself to make an extended visit here," Philip rejoined with an earnestness that smote unpleasantly on Hugh Cunningham's ear. The right of way with Virginia had so long been conceded to him by all the young men of their acquaintance that Philip's manner toward her and his evident misunderstanding of the true situation aroused an unwonted feeling in his heart and brought the unsettled relation between himself and Virginia before him in a new light.

"Virginia, could you tell me exactly how Dinah makes these little seed cakes," he asked, abruptly changing a subject that, some way, annoyed him. "Berenice can't get them to taste like these at all."

"Berenice! Think of it, Mr. Blair!" Kittie cried disdainfully. "A darky cook called Berenice! Can you imagine anything short of a duchess supporting the dignity of a name like that?"

"You might suppose her little short of an empress if

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you saw the high hand with which she rules things at Cunningham Place," said Virginia.

"She is a trifle tyrannical," Hugh admitted. "Now, the other day I spoke to her about these cakes. She had made some that were very good but they were not like these and these are what I want. I told her to speak to Dinah and find out how to make them. 'Law sakes! Marse Hugh,' she said indignantly, 'my cookin' done ben satisfyin' to de quality long befo' Dinah Lee ebba set foot in her marsta's kitchen. You s'pose I's gwine ter miliate my sef by axin' her how ter cook!'"

"Never mind, Hugh," Virginia said consolingly, "Dinah has a large jar full of these cakes; I saw them in the pantry this morning, and if you will remind me I'll give you some of them to take home with you."

"Another evidence that men are only boys grown tall, Blair. I have been carrying tit-bits home from Lee's Summit since I was five years old," Hugh said jestingly.

After supper the four returned to the veranda where Mr. Lee waited to discuss with Philip in greater detail the subject of the abandoned business enterprise, for he wished very much, in case his forebodings proved groundless, to secure the proposed mills for Chattanooga. Kittie and Hugh and Mrs. Lee and Virginia, a little apart, conversed in softened tones of Hugh's return to William and Mary and of Kittie's last year in an Atlanta seminary, laying with eager anticipation many a joyous plan for the vacation days of another summer. The persistency with which Kittie included Philip in these plans and with which Hugh left him out was suggestive of the state of

Meanwhile the August moon, changed now from a great copper-colored ball to a small, silvery-white disc, glided upward from the horizon, flooding all the earth with its soft, uncertain light and "tracing shimmering brocades" beneath the trees all over the lawn. The scene

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was rapturously beautiful. A long dark line of mountains hung in gloomy grandeur in the distance, the broad lawn rolled away from the veranda steps until it was lost on every hand in the white mist which hovered over the lowlands like the milky way in the immensity of space. A quarter of a mile away the negro cabins could be seen, singly or in little groups, while from them, the prayer meeting having ended, came sounds of merriment or hilarity, changing ever and anon to strains of sweetest music as some old plantation melody floated out upon the air.

"The songs of Homer," someone has said, "were a bond of union between the Grecian states." So, in almost equal degree, the negro melodies of anti-bellum days have effaced the boundary lines of states and suggest to us, not Virginia, or Georgia, or Texas, or Tennessee, but Dixie, the sunny land where the heart is always light.

"Mr. Lee, I have read about scenes like this but I always supposed they belonged exclusively in stories," Philip Blair said as the last notes of a chorus echoed and died away. "You never grow tired of it, do you?"

"Never," was the ready rejoinder. "I have been here more than a quarter of a century now and the passing year seems always the best yet."

"I can readily see how people born to a life like this where the system of slavery presents itself almost as a beneficent institution, should resent interference from an outside source," Blair said thoughtfully.

"And yet as a rule, it is the better class of slaveholders who are the most ready to deprecate the evils of the system," answered Mr. Lee.

"I wonder," said Virginia, whether our slaves would really be happier free than they are over there to-night?"

"No," answered Blair emphatically, "perhaps never half so happy again. As it is, they need take no care for the

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morrow. Free, all the cares and privations of life would weigh upon them and, as your father said this morning, they are singularly unprepared for such responsibility."

"Then why should it seem wrong to keep them so? And sometimes it does seem wrong, even to me," said Virginia.

"Well, of course, their happiness is the happiness of irresponsibility, and only a generation or two of freedom can fit them for contact with the world," Philip replied. "The development of the race must be at the expense of those who attain their freedom first."

"I should hate to think of sacrificing Webster and Dinah and Sallie and Sam to the good of the race," said Virginia, with an earnestness at which Philip smiled as he replied:

"That reminds me, Miss Lee, that I have heard it said, with reference to the negro, that in the South you love the individual and detest the race, while in the North we adore the race and abhor the individual. I scarcely know which attitude is more to be commended."

"Why should you be always so concerned about the nigs, anyway, Virginia?" Hugh asked carelessly. "Their condition is only a part of life, don't you know it is? You can't set them free, and if you could, how could you do without them? You can't cook your own meals or sew your own dresses. Why should you bother your mind about that kind of thing?"

"The day is at hand, Hugh, when we must all bother our minds about many unpleasant things," said Mr. Lee kindly.

"O, I don't know," Hugh replied. "It's election time—don't you think that is all? There's never been an election since I can remember that there has not been more or less of this kind of feeling."

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"As I said to Margaret a while ago, I truly hope you may be right, Hugh, but I still insist I feel a great anxiety concerning the issue of this campaign," said Mr. Lee.

Jerry now appeared with the horses, and Hugh, reminding Virginia of the cookies, disappeared with her to the dining-room.

"I like the presumption of this Yankee, I swear I do," he began, sarcastically, as soon as he found himself alone with Virginia. "He perfectly ignores my existence, and usurps you as completely as if he were the only man on earth. 'Tis well for us both his time here is short. I should be compelled to assassinate him else."

"Why, Hugh," returned Virginia, laughing, "what an injustice you do Mr. Blair. He evidently believes himself to be doing you a kindness in making opportunities for you to pay your court to our Kittie."

"Our Kittie, indeed!" cried Hugh. "Kittie is a dear, to be sure, but it is only yesterday she sat on my knee in short skirts and pinafores."

"You talk like a patriarch, Hugh. Stop to think of it, you are not so vastly Kittie's senior after all," Virginia said, teasingly.

"I am twenty-two come next June," Hugh said, resentfully, putting out his hand to stay her in the dining-room. But the cookies had been wrapped up, tied into a neat parcel and slipped into Hugh's pocket, and, finding no further necessity for delay, she led the way back to the veranda. With a good-bye to Philip and a good-night all around, Hugh sprang into his saddle and galloped off down the drive.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee also rose to leave the veranda as soon as Hugh was gone. Pursuant of the plan agreed upon earlier in the evening, they said good-bye as well as good-night, Philip having refused to stop at Lee's Summit over night unless he should be permitted to slip quietly out in

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the morning without waking anyone, and join Tom, who was instructed to have the horses ready at the gate at daybreak.

Kittie, too, tired out with the merry making of the evening before and the varied pleasures of the long day, held out her hand to Philip. "Good-bye, Mr. Blair," she said. "You must come again next summer and we'll go for some lovely picnics over on the mountains that we could only show you from a distance to-day. You haven't half found out all the delightful things about Tennessee yet."

"Good-bye Kittie," said Philip, looking admiringly into the bright face turned up toward his own. "It is worth the trip to Tennessee only to have caught a little of the sunshine in your face."

A moment later Kittie was gone, and Philip, turning to Virginia, said, "I suppose it would really be the white thing for me to go to bed, too, and give you a chance to rest, Miss Lee, but you remember you told me last night you would sing for me to-day, and I haven't sufficient self-denial to release you from your promise. Will you do so now?"

"With pleasure," said Virginia, turning toward the parlor. "I believe I did say something to that effect, but the day has been so completely occupied that I had forgotten about it."

"I had not forgotten about it," Philip replied, selecting from the music on the piano a favorite song and placing it before her, "but this is the first opportunity I have found to remind you of it. There are so many interesting things to be done at Lee's Summit, that even an August day scarcely gives one time for them all."

An expression which Philip readily recognized came into Virginia's face. "What is worth doing at all is worth

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doing well,'” she quoted, as she began running lightly through the prelude to the song before her.

“I have no idea what they would say at home if I told them the reputation I have acquired down here,” Philip replied. “I am regarded there as rather sedate and taciturn.”

But Virginia had played through her prelude twice already, and she now began her song with only an amusing look of mock astonishment and incredulity as answer to Philip’s remark.

For a long time she sat before the piano, singing one after another of the songs Philip selected for her, or, while she rested, talking those pretty nothings which are so interesting to the parties engaged in the conversation, so meaningless to one who chances to overhear them. Philip leaned across the corner of the piano, scarcely knowing—whether she played or sang—which pleased him most, the rippling music of her voice or the changing beauty of her face. It was a picture destined to fill his sleeping and his waking dreams for many a day.

The great, old-fashioned hall clock struck —, but Philip had something else to think about and forgot to count. He was only vaguely conscious that a man who has to be up before the lark should have been asleep these two hours or more.

“Thank you, Miss Lee,” he said, as Virginia finished the last song, folded the music and laid it aside. “I am far from considering myself a critic in the art, but you seem to me to have a rarely sweet voice and unusual taste in selecting songs that are suited to it, which is half the battle. I doubt not I shall be wishing very much to visit Lee’s Summit again before many months.”

“Well, you have father’s and mother’s invitation, and you may be sure they are sincere,” Virginia replied.

“I hope you do not fail to notice that one voice is lack-

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ing to make the invitation unanimous? A Yankee would scarcely like to venture a visit here without first knowing your mind?" Philip said interrogatively, regarding Virginia with the peculiar expression which was something too grave for a smile and yet had all the softening effect of a smile upon his face.

"The children of the Old Dominion pride themselves on their hospitality, Mr. Blair, and I am a child of the Old Dominion, a generation or so removed, to be sure, but still with all the old traditions loyally preserved," Virginia answered.

"It is enough," said Philip, holding out his hand to say good-bye. "I can think of no event or series of events that could keep me from coming back. Circumstances may hasten or retard my visit, but sooner or later you will see me."

The first glow of dawn was tingeing the eastern horizon as Philip arose, dressed hastily, and, quietly descending the stairs, let himself out upon the veranda with as little noise as possible. As if reluctant to quit a spot that had charmed him so much, he paused a moment to look about him. Perhaps by accident, perhaps by design, he raised his eyes to the window which, by some means, he had found to be Virginia's. There, on the little balcony opening from her room, he saw a graceful figure in bright robes like some bird of brilliant plumage. It was Virginia. Having heard his step, she had thrown a loose outer garment about her, thrust her feet into soft slippers, and stepped out upon the balcony to wave a noiseless good-bye to the parting guest. It was another picture for memory's album, and Philip remembered it long—the heavy braids of dark hair that fell across her shoulders, the shapely white hand, the smile that greeted the look of glad surprise that leaped into his own face.

And Virginia? She watched the tall, straight figure

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turn away, run lightly down the steps, and disappear in the uncertain light. She listened to the click-click of the horses' hoofs until it died away in the distance, and then crept back to bed where she fell immediately into the untroubled sleep that is youth's own heritage, and dreamed for two long hours of black knights, mounted warriors, Roman togas—and gray eyes through which one could see down into the soul and read its very thoughts.

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CHAPTER V.

History was made fast in the United States in the months that followed. As a vessel of water will stand at the freezing point for hours and still retain its liquid form, yet at the least "troubling of the waters" will fly into a myriad of shining crystals, so great influences had been quietly shaping southern sentiment for almost a century, yet it required the election of 1860 to crystallize into strong determination that undercurrent of discontent which otherwise might not have asserted itself for years. The flame of disunion, as every one knows, broke out first in South Carolina, spreading rapidly from state to state, until six other assemblies had annulled the bond of union between themselves and the national government.

Fierce and bitter was the conflict waged in Tennessee, especially in the eastern part, where Thomas Lee gave up every private interest and went from town to town and county to county urging the claims of the union and the dangers of secession. When at last the convention met to determine the course that state would pursue, Mr. Lee was there, and to the final hour used all his influence against disunion. The question having been decided against him, however, like many of his neighbors who had opposed secession, he entered earnestly into the cause his state espoused. He was at once elected to the Confederate congress at Richmond, whither he went in July, leaving Mrs. Lee and Virginia, with the aid of the overseer, to take charge of the plantation. It was a formidable undertaking for women as inexperienced as they, yet Virginia, who was much the stronger character of the two, entered upon it bravely. The troubles she had been looking for were at hand, and she determined to

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bear her share of the burden. During the first summer the work in the fields went on as it had always done. Mr. Lee had been careful to keep only such slaves as could be controlled without the extreme punishment resorted to on many plantations. Now, in his absence, his wife and daughter were reaping the benefit of his wise management and the mild treatment he had always employed with his negroes.

Hugh returned in the early autumn, and, for a time, took up the accustomed routine of his life, loitering idly at home in the mornings, riding over to Lee's Summit or making an aimless trip to the village in the afternoon. This air of indifference at a time so critical was exceedingly annoying to Virginia, and she made no effort to conceal from Hugh her disapproval of his conduct. Finding her more and more frequently engaged in the performance of duties in which he had no interest, absorbed continually by a question which was, in reality, a source of vexation to him, he was constrained to silence on the theme which, though ever uppermost in his own mind, was so evidently no part of Virginia's thoughts. It was not until the Christmas time that he ventured to address her seriously concerning their relation. Under the softening influence of that happy season, he was emboldened by her kindness to ask if he had not, by his long silence, earned a right to speak to her once more of the subject that was always nearest his very heart.

"You do not have to earn rights with me, Hugh," she answered, reproachfully. "Have I not always been perfectly frank with you, and have I ever seemed unwilling to listen to whatever you have to say to me? I am sure I am very far from wishing a barrier of any kind to arise between us."

"Well, then, Virginia, when am I to hope for an answer to the question I wish so much to ask? Are you not

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ready to decide by this time whether you will ever be my wife?" he asked.

The teasing propensity which had made Virginia domineer over Hugh in their childhood, but which she had forgotten for these many months, was strong upon her for the moment, and there was a roguish twinkle in her eye as she replied, "Why, Hugh, what would you do with a wife if you had one? Wives cost money, don't you know they do? and I am perfectly certain you never turned an honest penny in your life."

"Oh! as to that," Hugh answered, taking her seriously, "you know my father dotes on you, Virginia, and he would increase my allowance, of course. He'd know it takes more to keep two than one."

At another time Virginia might have been amused by this reply, but just now it revealed such a shockingly trivial conception of life that her jesting mood was checked, and for a moment no suitable reply came to her. Deep down in her heart she was wondering whether Hugh would ever find any of the things worth while in life. Hugh, mistaking her silence, continued:

"Your father is compelled to be away from home, leaving you and your mother alone. Would it not be the natural and proper thing for me to take my place by your side as your protector in his absence? Will you not give me this right, Virginia?"

"Hugh, I cannot," Virginia replied, earnestly. "There is not a single impulse in my heart that would prompt me to such a step. It is not that I have no interest in you, for, in a way, I have, but there are other things far more important to me now than marriage, and I simply have no inclination to consider the subject."

"But you must remember the times grow more perilous every month. Suppose the lines of war continue to draw more closely about us, you will be exposed to every kind

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of hardship and privation, and, perhaps, to insult and wrong."

"There, Hugh, I like that. It is the first serious consideration of the war I have ever been able to draw from you. As to our safety, I have no fear. I have studied our lines carefully, and I cannot see how we can think of danger so long as our generals hold their fortifications along the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. They are like a great wall between us and the northern army, and I have too implicit faith in the great host of Confederate soldiers standing behind them to think of danger here. Oh! I have never wished to be a man, but if I were one, I'd not lose a day in going to the defense of the Confederacy, because I believe, with all my heart, we are standing for liberty to-day just as much as our forefathers did in the Revolution."

Hugh winced a little at this. "Do you wish me to go to the war, Virginia?" he asked.

"I wish no one to go who does not desire to do so," she replied, "only I cannot conceive how any man can stand aloof from what seems to me a privilege in this time of need."

"Your father manages to keep out," Hugh suggested.

"Hugh, did I not know that it is not your better self that prompted that remark I should resent it," Virginia replied. "As it is, I shall only say what you know as well as I, that father does not go to Richmond from choice, but because he is sent there, and feels he is needed there. If you think it is for honor that he goes, you greatly misjudge him, for he has more than once been solicited to go to the national congress and always refused because he could not be away from home for so long. And as for going to evade service in the field—well, I shall not even comment upon such an insinuation."

"Forgive me, Virginia, it was not right for me to say

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such a thing to you," Hugh replied. "I know your father always does what he believes to be his duty, of course. I was only nettled because your remark seemed to reflect on father and me for not going into the army."

"Your father's position I understand and appreciate," Virginia said quickly. "His affections very naturally cling to the national government, yet his personal interests are all with us. It would be hard for him to take up arms on either side."

"Then, too," said Hugh, "his brothers are already in the field on the union side while he knows that I, if I go at all, will go with the Confederate forces."

"Do you ever think of going, Hugh?" Virginia asked eagerly.

The peculiar ring in her voice was not lost upon Hugh. Could a girl love a man and at the same time *wish* him to enlist as a soldier? It was wholly beyond his comprehension.

"Do you wish me to go, Virginia?" he asked sadly.

"Do you wish to go?"

"For your sake I might be willing to go," he answered.

"Ah! but that is not it," she replied. "I want to see a man go because he is willing to fight and die, if need be, for the right."

"It is a pity, Virginia, that I should not have been made of different stuff, since it is my fate to have grown up loving you," Hugh said disconsolately. "It is simply incomprehensible to me that a man should voluntarily bring hardship and calamity upon himself for the sake of a mere sentiment." As he spoke, he reached out his hand and, taking hers for a moment, said, "I am going now, good-bye. I'll see you again soon."

He came to Lee's Summit two or three times during the succeeding week but his visits were short and he was silent and thoughtful much of the time. On New Year's

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day he stalked resolutely into the parlor, where he found Virginia alone. Refusing an invitation to be seated, he stood for some minutes before the fire, holding his hat in one hand while, with the other, he carelessly lashed his riding boot with his whip. Virginia saw from his face that something unusual was in his mind but, knowing his moods, waited for his spirit to move him.

"Virginia," he at last said slowly, "I am going to Richmond to-morrow to enlist."

"Oh Hugh! I am so glad," Virginia exclaimed. "I always knew you were a good brave fellow and this confirms me in the belief."

"No, I am not very good, and I am afraid I am not going for the same reason you would go, but I see no use for me to stay. It is as dull as Cunningham Place over here any more and then—well, it will please you, I think, for me to go. Will it not, Virginia?"

"But I do not want you to go to please me," she said in a disappointed tone.

"Don't think I expect to gain anything by it," he answered quickly. "I didn't mean that I hope to win your favor by going, yet I cannot conceal from myself the fact that I am going more for your sake than for the sake of the cause."

Virginia sat resting her chin in her hand and gazing silently into the fire. Hugh watched her face narrowly. "Well," she said after a minute or two, "it will help the cause, whatever your incentive may be, and it seems so much more noble to go than to be idling here while so many brave men are sacrificing everything for our rights. But why do you go to Richmond?"

"Because I want to be in the thickest of the fight and where help is the most needed if I am going at all," he answered. "Besides, there are two or three William and Mary fellows with Lee and that will make things

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more endurable over there. And Virginia, I may have seemed a little slow in entering, but when the battle is on, you will find, if you hear from me at all, that I am brave enough."

"I am sure of it, Hugh, and I'll think of you constantly. It will be a consolation to me to know that while I may not go myself, I have a representative in the field. Woman's lot in this awful time is to watch and work and weep and pray, and I'll pray for you every day—for the success of our arms and the preservation of your life."

"Thank you very much for saying that. I have faith in your prayers and the thought of them will make me a better man and a braver soldier. But there is another subject that I must speak to you about," he added. "Father, you know, feels it impossible to take either side in this struggle and he is greatly chagrined by the slurs that are cast at him on every hand. He would like to sell the place and the negroes and go abroad until the trouble is settled. He has thought of doing so before, and now that I am going away he is more inclined to do it than ever."

"Oh! but he can sell only at a great sacrifice now!" Virginia exclaimed in surprise.

"That is true, of course, but he is convinced that he can sell to better advantage now than he can later on. He says this war is no 'summer hoilday' as some have prophesied, and that every day our property will depreciate in value. But would it make any difference in your final decision about our future, Virginia?"

There was something so boyish and yet so pathetic in the question that, although she smiled, Virginia's voice had a note like fondness in it as she replied: "Not in the least, Hugh. If I ever marry you it will be for yourself and not for your plantation."

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Hugh then asked for Mr. and Mrs. Lee—for Mr. Lee was spending the holidays at home. Although surprised by Hugh's sudden determination, Mr. Lee expressed his warm approval while Mrs. Lee could not restrain her tears as she bade him good-bye.

"It seems almost as if I were sending my own son away to battle," she said affectionately.

"Thank you, Mrs. Lee. You have taken the place of my mother as nearly as any one could, and I'll try to behave as you would wish your own son to do if you sent him into battle."

He hurried through the last words of farewell and departed, not looking back until he had passed the lodge and entered the road at the foot of the hill. Then he waved his hand to Virginia who still stood as he had left her on the veranda, thinking she had never been so nearly willing to promise Hugh whatever he might ask as she was at that moment.

The next day he was gone. Within the month Mr. Lee had returned to Richmond and Mr. Cunningham, having succeeded in disposing of his place and negroes, was far on his way to Europe. Mrs. Lee and Virginia were now alone indeed.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE sultry August afternoon was drawing to a close and an air of quiet expectancy had succeeded the hum of busy preparation that had gone on all day at Lee's Summit. In marked contrast with the desolation and waste all about it, we find this home, after an absence of a year and a half, looking very much as it did on the day Virginia waved a farewell to Hugh Cunningham, just setting out to be a soldier boy. The freshly mown lawn with its neat walks, smooth drive and well-kept trees and shrubs, was in its usual order. In the garden there were an abundance of fruits and vegetables and a profusion of beautiful flowers, all redolent with the perfume of sweet herbs.

"Rosemary red and violet blue,
Thyme and sweet marjoram, hyssop and rue."

In the fields the crops were a full fortnight in advance of the best to be found elsewhere, and everything betokened thrift and careful husbandry. The fences were in good repair, the house, the barns and other out-buildings had been recently repainted, and the cabins of the negro quarters, as well as the trunks of the trees in the orchards, gleamed in their bright coats of new white-wash.

For there were still negro quarters here and negroes to inhabit them, in spite of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and the Emancipation Proclamation. Immediately upon the promulgation of that edict, Mr. Lee returned home and, after explaining the purport of the President's measure, warned his slaves of the difficulties lying in wait for them

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in a world of which they knew nothing and proposed to retain them on the plantation for a fair compensation. Nearly all of them gladly accepted the offer and took their places in the fields the same as in former years. Hudson was a faithful and competent overseer, while Virginia maintained a careful supervision of the entire place. Thus it had happened that one spot had escaped the wholesale destruction that threatened to obliterate prosperity in all the slave-holding states.

In the house, on the contrary, were signs of the most stringent economy. No expenditure which was necessary to preserve the plantation was spared, but Mrs. Lee and Virginia saved every dollar that was not absolutely demanded for personal and household expenses. They denied themselves all luxuries and many comforts and conveniences, that they might have as much as possible to give for the relief of the southern soldiers who were beginning to be sadly in need of supplies. Carpets were faded and curtains worn, while much of the luxurious furniture of former days had been sold to meet the constantly increasing demands for more food and more clothing at Richmond or Knoxville or Atlanta. After the fall of Vicksburg, news came of suffering and privation among the sick and wounded and Virginia was the leading spirit at Chattanooga in preparing comforts and delicacies to be sent thither. On this occasion, as a last resort, she sold the grand piano which her father had given her when she returned from school at Richmond. There was a keen pang of regret in her heart and a hard look of determination on her face as she saw it carried from the house and, for the first time, deep in her inner being, she was conscious of a passing impulse to count the cost. She put the thought immediately from her and found her consolation in the great quantity of useful sup-

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plies she was thus able to provide for those who were suffering in the cause she loved.

The occasion for the excitement at Lee's Summit this August afternoon, was the coming of Hugh Cunningham to spend the furlough granted him as a reward for his gallant services and as a restorative for his strength which had been greatly impaired by wounds and illness.

Hugh's career as a soldier had been marked by some success. More than once his valor had been the subject of honorable comment by the Richmond press, while his rapid advancement to the rank of Captain attested his claim to such distinction. Gallantly and faithfully, without wound or scar, he had served the Army of Virginia in that series of brilliant victories that preceded the invasion of Pennsylvania. His reverses began, however, with the defeat of the Confederacy at Gettysburg, where he was so severely wounded that for weeks the Lees were unable to hear anything from him. It was with great joy, therefore, that they learned of his safety and had now, the immediate prospect of seeing him.

The entire household had spent the day "getting ready" for his reception for, be sure, his renown abroad had in no way lessened the esteem in which he was held by his friends at home. Virginia, especially, had in her mind's eye, re-created him into an ideal character and lo! he stood before her inner vision, in form like the Hugh of eighteen months before, but endowed with all those manly and desirable qualities which she had hitherto fondly but vainly hoped to find in his disposition. She even believed herself to be growing fond of him—that is, in the *right way*—and as she stood before her mirror arranging her toilet, she was conscious of a deeper interest in her personal appearance than she had felt for many months. She gave an extra pull to her hair to loosen its natural waves from the close confinement

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placed upon them of late. As she did so, a soft curl or two escaped and fell lovingly about her face, while the golden rays of the setting sun came through the open window and rested like a halo upon her head. It was a beautiful picture and Virginia was sufficiently like other girls to smile with pardonable pride as she looked at the reflection. She wondered what Hugh would think of her, if he would find her changed, and if he would care for her as he once did. Then she glanced at her plain white gown and half wished she had permitted herself the extravagance of a handsome one for this occasion, such as Hugh had been accustomed to see her wear. She retracted the wish on the instant as unworthy of her own high resolves and of the lofty character their guest had developed in the war!

Her toilet completed, she went for a last peep into the best chamber to see that all was in readiness there. The prospect was most inviting. The snowy curtains waved back and forth in the evening breeze. The clean, cool linen of the bed was suggestive of rest and comfort. The very flowers which were there in abundance bespoke the welcome of every heart on the plantation. Below stairs, too, similar preparations had been made and Virginia had taken particular care to make an arrangement of the furniture that would display its scarcity as little as possible. Remembering Hugh's one-time lack of zeal for the cause, she hoped he would not notice how many familiar articles had disappeared, but, if he did, she reasoned, he would appreciate the motive which impelled their sale and sanction what she and her mother had done.

Mrs. Lee was already on the porch when her daughter descended and the servants were gathered about within calling distance, all eager for a glimpse of "Marse Hugh" and of their old friend Jerry, who, with his experience at

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college and his trip to the war had become a much-traveled gentleman and a veritable hero in their untutored minds.

Sallie was greatly concerned all day lest some mistake had been made as to Jerry's coming, and appealed so often to "young Missus" for her confirmation of the report that at last, in self-defence, Virginia read the message aloud: "I shall get into Chattanooga by the Knoxville train on Saturday afternoon. Jerry is with me.

Yours,
Hugh."

Sallie's face beamed all over with pleasure, and she hurried away to don her Sunday clothes and make herself as hideous as possible in gorgeous flowers and ribbons of many hues. Thus bedecked, she sat on the front steps with all the anxiety of an expectant child.

They had waited but a few minutes when a woolly head peeped out from among the branches of a tall tree and an excited voice called out, "Dey's comin'! I sees de kerrige on top de big hill yander!" The nimble little body slipped to the ground and ran with all speed to announce the glad news to the watchers on the veranda.

"It may not be our carriage, though," Virginia answered.

"Yes 'tis! Don' I know Marse Lee's kerrige an' de black hosses? 'Sides, it's Sam on de box to be seen plain's day."

"Now, Jake, no one could tell who was on the box at that distance," Mrs. Lee answered. "Look again to be sure you are not mistaken."

Jake was a trifle crestfallen, but, hurrying back to the tree, he scaled the highest limb and yelled out triumphantly, "Yes 'tis! 'Tis Sam on de box, cause I sees de yaller ban' on 'is hat an' de yaller gloves he done tol' us he gwine ter buy fo' de 'casion!" adding after an extra peep,

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"An' dar's anno'er gemman on de box wid Sam. Spect it's Jerry, but shouldn't think he'd ride side an' side a common nigger like Sam!"

"Be shame, Jake!" Sallie called out. "Co'se Jerry not done got big feelin' cause he's traveled 'bout so much. He nevah go back on 'is ol' frens, I can tell you dat!"

"Well, you see, Miss Sallie Lee, dat when I gits big an' goes off to de wa', I don' come back an' sociate frenly like wid de niggahs what never been off dis place!"

This was a damper to Sallie's feelings, for it was an echo of the fear entertained in her heart all day; but she was determined not to give in without a struggle, and she shot a scornful glance at Jake and muttered something about "keepin' 'is mouf shet!"

While this by-play was going on, the carriage came swiftly over the nearest hill, and a shout of joyous welcome went up from the assembled darkies. Jerry was bowing and smiling on every hand, and even Hugh looked out to wave a greeting to the familiar faces as the carriage rolled along the shady drive and neared the house that seemed like his own home after the experiences of the last few months.

Sallie could not refrain from poking Jake in the ribs with a "Didn' I tell you so?" as Jerry leaped from the box and bestowed an effusive greeting upon all his old companions. Spying Sallie, he rushed at her, and, gathering her in his arms, whirled her hilariously about the yard to the delight and admiration and envy of every black beauty on the premises.

Meanwhile, Hugh was quite as cordially, though somewhat less effusively, greeted by Mrs. Lee and Virginia.

"Are you glad to see me, Virginia?" he asked, eagerly, as he observed that Virginia allowed him to retain her hand longer than common courtesy actually demanded.

"Yes, Hugh, very, very glad," she answered, while hope

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kindled afresh in Hugh's breast as he noted the soft flush on her cheek and the shy lowering of her eyes, the result, though he did not know it, of her recent air-castle building.

In his room, Hugh saw the thoughtful care displayed in the preparation for his coming, and further indulged himself in the belief that at last Virginia was beginning to care for him. A smile of satisfaction passed over his face as the bouquet of beautiful pink roses on the table attracted his attention. Virginia had purposely gathered them from a bush that was his favorite even when they were children, and the familiar fragrance called to mind many happy scenes in his past life. Just before he left the room he selected a fine, half-opened bud and pinned it on the lapel of his coat. As he did so, a vision of Virginia came back to him as she had looked one summer afternoon long ago, when she stood before him with these same pink roses in her hair and at her throat, fastening one of them in his buttonhole, to show to the world, she laughingly said, that he was the knight of the pink rose for that afternoon. How beautiful she had looked that day! And almost unconsciously Hugh found himself comparing the woman he had just greeted below stairs with the picture now in his mind. A vague feeling of disappointment came over him which startled him. Had he himself changed, or was Virginia less beautiful than she was three years ago? He felt that it would be treason to say so, and then, as he recalled the sweet womanly face and welcoming blue eyes, he indignantly renounced the thought, although there was assuredly a change for which he could not account.

As he came downstairs Virginia met him in the hall and led the way into the dining-room, whither Mrs. Lee had already preceded them. She took her place at the head of the table as she had been accustomed to do since her

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father's absence, while Webster obsequiously held back the chair at her right for Hugh to be seated. Webster had served at his master's table ever since Hugh could remember, and he now regarded that young man as a conquering hero to whom even he could scarcely show sufficient deference.

"You see, Hugh, we are a home party for this one evening. I thought you would probably prefer a quiet meal after your long journey," the hostess said as they sat down.

"Thank you Mrs. Lee, for your consideration. Nothing else could please me so much as to spend this evening with you and Virginia alone."

"You will observe, too, Hugh, that this is a supper after your own heart," Virginia said. "We held a conclave to think up all your favorite dishes, and Dinah prepared them just as she knew you always liked them."

"By the way, we have a great supply of the little seed cakes you used to like so much. Virginia will show you where to find them, and you can help yourself at any time," Mrs. Lee added, laughing.

"You will probably find my appetite for them all the sharper for having done without them for so long, Mrs. Lee," Hugh replied, adding in a more serious tone, "I cannot tell you all how I thank you for your kindness to me. There is no soldier who feels more joy in returning to his own home than I do in coming here to-day."

"It is your home, Hugh, in a secondary way," Mrs. Lee said, kindly. "I have always regarded it so since your mother died and left Cunningham Place only half a home for you."

"You are very good, Mrs. Lee, and I assure you the freedom of Lee's Summit has done much to make up to me for the loneliness at home," Hugh answered, earnestly.

"There, Hugh," Virginia said, as she handed the quest

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a well-filled plate, "I hope to see you do full justice to that, although, I confess, I can scarcely wait to get back to the veranda and hear all about the things that have happened to you since you left us. It's what I've been living for ever since the word came that you were to have a furlough."

"Well, my experiences have been varied enough, I can tell you. They cover all sorts, from the most blood-curdling to the jolliest and most frivolous," Hugh answered, lightly."

"Really, Hugh?" Virginia exclaimed. "How can men be jolly in constant anticipation of battle or frivolous when gloom and disaster and even death are all about them?"

"Pshaw! Virginia, you take everything too seriously, and you don't know the world. Why, Richmond has been very gay both winters since I went over. There are operas and balls and parties and drives and dinners and calls just as if they had never heard of war and hunger and distress." Hugh's tone betrayed the old carelessness and half impatience that Virginia's ideas formerly drew from him.

"But Hugh, the soldiers are not interested in such things, are they? Surely they have not time for frivolity and mere pleasure now?" Virginia said.

There was a derisive note in Hugh's laugh that irritated Virginia. "O, Virginia, how little you know with all your wisdom!" he returned. "The soldiers are the center and life of the whole thing. Why, every girl is in love with a soldier."

"Then it isn't true that the army is in need and we should be sending supplies wherever we can collect them?" she said, indignantly, thinking of her piano and numerous household treasures that had been sacrificed.

"Yes, that is true, but it's different from what you may have thought. You see, it is this way, the supplies sent

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are for the common soldiers, the poor who are dependent upon the government for even the necessities of life. The balls and parties are attended by the officers and the rich privates who can afford to indulge in such pleasures."

"But if the common soldiers are suffering and the southern cause needs money, why do officers or men of whatever station fritter away their incomes instead of helping to maintain the war?" Virginia argued.

"You make the war and all connected with it too personal, Virginia. It is a national interest, and it's the purest folly to talk about supporting it by individual contributions."

"I cannot comprehend your view of the subject," she answered. "My whole soul is in the war, everything I have—or hope to have, if necessary—is consecrated to it because it is right, and I can never think of it as secondary to any other consideration. Only as the same spirit animates us all, can we hope to succeed against a power which has many times our numbers and our wealth. I had hoped our very devotion could overbalance the odds against us. But we will not disagree, Hugh. You have been a good soldier, and you must have a happy vacation."

"I have often tried to convince Virginia that she is sacrificing too much for the war," said Mrs. Lee, "but you know whatever she is, she is with her whole soul, Hugh."

"Of course she is sacrificing too much, I haven't a doubt of that," Hugh replied. "We must look to our individual interests now the same as at any other time, and a little association with the world would convince Virginia of the same."

"Then we needn't hope to succeed," Virginia said, scornfully, checking a noticeable impulse to say more.

There was a moment's rather painful silence before Mrs. Lee said, "We have written Mr. Lee of your visit

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and we hope to have him with us several days before your furlough is over."

"How long is your leave of absence, Hugh? We must arrange our plans with reference to the length of time you can stay," Virginia said, glad to change a subject that was anything but agreeable.

"I am due by the last of August if I return. At least, my place must be filled by that time."

"What can you do but return?" Virginia asked in surprise.

"O, I could get a substitute, but I suppose I will not do it," Hugh replied, with an air of indecision.

Virginia was disappointed and more or less disgusted with the indifference displayed, but she had determined to make this first evening as pleasant as possible for Hugh, so she let this subject, too, pass, and only said:

"There are ever so many interesting things to do while you are here. I have been planning a visit to the camp. General Bragg has invited us. Besides, as soon as father comes, the General is coming out for supper, and I am sure that will interest you."

Hugh doubted whether there was much congeniality between himself and General Bragg, but he well knew the effect such a remark would have upon Virginia, and for once he had tact enough to change the topic of conversation.

It was not until they had finished supper and risen from the table that Hugh, turning to pour a glass of water from the pitcher that always stood on the sideboard, discovered that that piece of furniture was gone and there was only a small table in its stead. He had been purposely seated at table so his back was toward the place where it formerly stood.

"Mrs. Lee," he said, looking inquiringly about the room, "I trust you are not falling into the besetting weakness of

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womankind for turning the house topsy-turvy by changing the furniture from place to place. I cannot remember the time when the sideboard did not stand here."

The sideboard was an old one, very large and handsome, which had belonged in the Lee family for two generations, and it was one of the articles that guests at Lee's Summit never forgot.

Virginia hesitated a moment while a flush of annoyance and indecision spread over her face. Then, as if resentful of her own weakness, she said, impatiently:

"We sold the sideboard."

"Sold it!" Hugh exclaimed. "Why I thought it was an heirloom that money could not buy."

"In these days money, enough money, can buy anything," was the unsatisfactory reply.

"But surely it has not come to this?" he said, turning to Mrs. Lee. "I understood that your slaves were at work and the plantation in a prosperous condition. Did you dream that I could remain away from you, enjoying a liberal income, if I had known you were reduced to this?"

"It was not necessary to sell the sideboard, Hugh. The plantation has done well, and our income is almost as good as it ever was," Mrs. Lee replied, looking hesitatingly at Virginia.

"Then I don't understand," Hugh said, vaguely.

"I sold it to fit out a box to send to the hospital at Vicksburg," Virginia announced defiantly, and, turning as if to dismiss the subject, she walked out to the veranda, Mrs. Lee and Hugh following her.

Hugh felt nettled by the turn the conversation had taken, and vexed by what he regarded as Virginia's fanaticism, but he smothered his annoyance, and, settling himself with a cigar in a commodious easy chair, said cheerily, "This is the grandest old veranda on earth, and I am never so happy as I am right here. I have been in many beauti-

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ful homes in Richmond and Alexandria, but nothing ever quite takes the place of this gallery. And, Mrs. Lee, many a night as I sat about the camp fire or slept beneath a dripping tent I have dreamed that I sat here just as I do now and as I have so often done before."

"Yes, if father were only here and Mr. Cunningham and Uncle Marion, we might imagine ourselves back once more in the old days," Virginia replied.

"By the way," Hugh said, "do you know anything of the Chesters lately? I don't think I have heard a word about them since I went away."

"Only that Marion is with Johnston's army and has been made Colonel," Mrs. Lee answered.

"Where are Mrs. Chester and Kittie?"

"At their home in Atlanta. We wrote for them to come to us but they preferred to remain nearer Marion, and then, too, they feel that Atlanta is absolutely secure and rather insist upon our coming to them."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea in case of the approach of the Union forces," Hugh replied.

"Why, do you think there is a particle of danger that General Bragg will not be able to hold Chattanooga?" Virginia asked in surprise.

"O, there is always some danger, and the indications are that a very strong force will be sent against him soon."

"But the Federal army is already divided, we hear, and only a part of it is coming this way," Mrs. Lee argued.

"Rosecrans, who has been sent against Bragg, has a strong army, and, should Burnside be successful at Knoxville and join the expedition to Chattanooga, we may well fear the result. Besides, before I left the east, it was already noised about that Hooker, with a large detachment from the Army of the Potomac, was on his way west."

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"I wonder, daughter, if it might not be best for us to shut up the place and go to Marion's for a few weeks until we know what the result will be?" Mrs. Lee asked anxiously.

"No, mother, we must not think of it. I have no fear. General Bragg surely knows the situation, and he assures us that he can defend the strongholds in the mountains and protect the village against any force the North can send against him."

"Men have been certain of success before and yet failed," Hugh suggested.

"But, Hugh, we can't leave. The negroes would be scattered in a week and the whole place completely demoralized," Virginia answered. "Even now it is only our personal influence that holds them here. They realize that they can go if they choose to do so, and they see the negroes all about them deserting the plantations."

"What you say is true, and I see how you feel about it," Hugh replied. "You have succeeded so well here you naturally hesitate about giving up until you are compelled to do so."

"*Unless* we are compelled to do so sounds better to me," Virginia said, smiling.

"Perhaps it does," Hugh said, responding to her mood. "It is probably wise for you to wait a few weeks longer, anyway. Of course it will require some time for the Yanks to accomplish much, to put it in the worst light."

"But let's forget all that now," Virginia begged. "We are safe here for the present, at least, and we may as well talk of more agreeable things. Tell us, Hugh, about what you've done, about General Lee, and Stonewall Jackson and his death, about your camp life, the great battles you have been in, and oh! especially about Gettysburg and how you were wounded and how you escaped."

"You have set me a lengthy task, Virginia," Hugh said,

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laughing, "but I'll follow up the best I can." Then, beginning with his enlistment, he related as connectedly as possible the events of the twenty months of his absence. He dwelt at some length on the fierce contest in which he was wounded, telling of Jerry's faithfulness in finding him and helping him to a sheltering wood.

"But after all," he added, "we might both have starved there, and I, myself, have died from my wounds, had it not been for two Yankees—old acquaintances, too—who found me and took me to a farm house where kind people cared for me until I was able to make my way back to our own army. Those two Yankees—a New York man and his Irish servant—who came here three years ago, do you remember them? Blair, the man's name was, Philip Blair."

Like a dart the words reached their mark. Did she remember? *He* was in the *Union Army*, then, and had, no doubt, forgotten all about—Lee's Summit!

Virginia did not reply.

"Blair—Blair?" Mrs. Lee repeated slowly. "O, yes, the man who came here the last summer Marions were here to see about some mills. I've wondered sometimes what became of him. He has probably been the most of the time in the war. He helped you, did you say, Hugh?"

"Yes, he saved my life, in all probability," Hugh replied. "You remember that hallucination of his about our Kittie, Virginia?"

Virginia gave a laughing assent, while Hugh continued: "Well, it still stays with him, it seems. He and that fellow Healy were with us when I pulled myself out of a half-conscious state in time to hear him say to Healy that for the sake of that little brown-eyed lass in Tennessee he'd give me a chance, and then he and Healy found a place where, as Healy said, they were tryin' to hum Dixie and whistle Yankee Doodle at the same time, and took me

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to it. He left, though, immediately after he saw me in comfortable quarters with a doctor to look after me, and I have never heard from him since."

During the remainder of the evening Virginia was unusually quiet, taking little part in the conversation, although she listened with interest to Hugh's stories of army life.

The next morning Mrs. Lee, Virginia, and Hugh prepared to attend services at the village church. Mr. Halliburton still ministered to the spiritual needs of the depleted flock, and, fanatical and unreasonable as he was, Virginia had made an earnest effort to aid him in his work because of his zealous advocacy of the southern cause.

As the three stood waiting on the veranda for Sam to bring the carriage around, Hugh was not only conscious of the same unaccountable change in Virginia's appearance which he had observed the evening before, but of a similar impression with reference to Mrs. Lee. For a moment he dwelt on the puzzling question but, recalling himself immediately, he said in his usual tone of careless good humor:

"Is Mr. Halliburton as profound as ever, Virginia?"

"Very much the same, I think. He isn't profound, of course, and he is too extreme in his views, but he is certainly an enthusiastic advocate of the Confederacy and, as such, he deserves our support."

"Heigh ho! I never thought to see the day when you would resent a mild dash of humor at the Halliburtons' expense," Hugh laughingly replied.

"I didn't mean to resent your remark, Hugh, but I do try to be as lenient as possible toward Mr. Halliburton's faults out of consideration for his devotion to our cause, blindly fanatical though he may be. He has helped me in everything I have undertaken to do for the relief of

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the soldiers and I am trying hard to be respectful and even helpful to him if I can."

"What a zealot you are, Virginia. You are of the stuff martyrs are made of. It is a pity I have not more of your zeal," Hugh replied.

In the meantime, they had entered the carriage and were driven rapidly toward Chattanooga, passing many scenes fraught with happy memories. Here was the pasture where they oftenest gathered pecans and chestnuts, yonder was the hill which had been their favorite picnic ground for many years, and away in the distance was the large overhanging rock from which Hugh one time fell and sprained his ankle because he climbed out to its highest pinnacle rather than, in Virginia's presence, take a dare from a boy much older than himself. Virginia and Hugh forgot all about the difference in their present views and opinions, and grew so interested in these reminiscences of their childhood that they were surprised—and almost sorry—when Sam drew up at the church door with a flourish, assuming an air of superiority over the other negroes standing about as Hugh, with his elegant uniform and military bearing, sprang quickly from the carriage and assisted the ladies to alight. No sooner had the trio disappeared than Sam was accosted by one of his sable brethren.

"Hey! Sam, don't you come any yo' high an' mighty airs 'roun' me. I's done got to be a free man an' don' do none o' yer drivin' white folks 'roun' an' waitin' on 'em."

"It's all right 'bout yo' freedom, Ike, but I say it'd be an honah to any man, black or white, to drive de kerrige Marse Hugh was a ridin' in."

"Why, who's he but jes' Hugh Cunnam dat we's knowed always?" Ike asked contemptuously.

"Who is he? He's one de bigges' men in de whole souf.

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He's been p'moted an' p'moted till he's nex' to Gin'l Lee in de ahmy," Sam retorted.

"Oh! Sam, you allus feels so sma't cause you belongs to de Lees—all you niggahs do! Dere's bigger folks dan de Lees, I hopes."

"Pshaw, Ike! nobody's talkin' 'bout my Marse Lee. I means de great Gin'l Lee what's de head o' de ahmy an' what's some kin to ou' fam'ly, too," Sam couldn't resist adding. "Ain't you nevah heered o' him? Jerry's done tol' me all 'bout 'im."

"Whar is Jerry? S'pose he's too high flutin' to ride on de same box an' sociate wid a common niggah like you, Sam?" Ike felt that he was scoring one on Sam by this remark.

"No, suh! Not by no means. Jerry's got to be mighty sma't but he's as plain an' condesenshus as us fellahs. Sakes lives! niggah, Jerry says he's had de chance to cou't de bes' o' dem Richmon' beauties but 'e wouldn't give Sallie fo' dem all!" As Sam said this, he drove away to hitch the horses in the shade, casting a malicious look at Ike, whose *soul* weakness—if he had one—was for the charms of Sallie Lee.

While this conversation was going on Hugh and the ladies entered the church where the services had already begun. In addition to the regular order of worship, Mr. Halliburton now offered special prayers for the soldiers, the government at Richmond, and the success of the southern arms. Then followed a rather tedious and lengthy sermon which led Hugh to the conclusion that there had been little improvement in two years.

At the close of the service the young soldier was gratified by the warm greetings of many friends who pressed about him with words of congratulation and approval, while he never showed to better advantage than when, under the inspiration of the hour, he recited to the

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visitors at Lee's Summit that afternoon many thrilling experiences he had had in old Virginia.

Virginia's interest in Hugh was re-enkindled. He was once more on the pedestal where, in imagination, she had placed him the day before. Hugh felt the change and was again conscious of that strange, new hope. He could talk to her now, freely and unreservedly, even approaching personalities which at another time it seemed impossible to utter, while Virginia did not show, and even scarcely felt, the restraint and aloofness that had characterized their association for so long. Mrs. Lee perceived the unusual good-fellowship between them when they came in to supper and wondered whether they had not arrived at some new understanding.

Alas for the perversity of Hugh's misfortune in his wooing of Virginia! As they left the dining room and drew near the parlor door, he called to Virginia, who had gone on before him:

"Come in here, Virginia, and sing for me. It has been a long time since I have heard any music worth the name."

It was what Virginia had expected, but dreaded most, to hear. It was to avoid this very request that, with almost unseemly haste, she was hurrying to the veranda. Her first impulse was to put off the inevitable moment by saying she would bring her guitar and sing for him in the moonlight. Instead, she determined to have the worst over at once.

"There is nothing to come in for, Hugh," she said stolidly. "I may as well confess the truth. The piano has gone the way of the sideboard and various other things you must certainly have missed ere this."

"Virginia, you cannot mean that you have *sold* your piano too!" he exclaimed.

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"I certainly do mean just that. I have sold the piano too," she declared emphatically.

"Well, you need a guardian, Virginia, for you are certainly beside yourself," Hugh said curtly.

"Perhaps you think yourself eligible to that office!" Virginia answered in a tone that effectually quelled Hugh's hopes for the time.

There was no more "good-fellowship" for that evening and both were glad when it was time to say good-night and go to bed.

But the clouds of the over-night were swept away by the coming of the morning sun and all went well in the days that followed until an evening came when Nell Taylor was to give a large party in honor of the young soldier who had become something of a hero. Indeed, so intermingled with Jerry's wonderful tales were the real facts concerning him, as to make it almost impossible for his nearest friends to unravel the threads and give a correct report of his actual achievements.

On that evening, Hugh appeared in the parlor faultlessly attired in dress costume of the latest design. "Why, Virginia, aren't you ready yet?" he asked as he saw her standing by a window toying with a bouquet she held in her hand.

Virginia realized that a battle was on.

"Yes, I am ready," she answered.

"Are you going to wear that dress? I thought this was to be a dress party," he said, glancing at his own reflection in a mirror opposite.

"I am sorry, Hugh, but this is the best dress I have," she answered with a quaver in her voice.

"You don't mean it!" he said in astonishment, and then as if struck by a new idea he added, with a tinge of sarcasm in his tone, "Is it possible this is another evidence of your strange fanaticism."

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Tears sprang to her eyes and a look of grieved indignation came into her face.

"You have no right to speak so to me, Hugh. Nothing I have done has been at your expense. If I choose to sacrifice my own comfort and pleasure in a cause I love, why must I be constantly pursued by your reproaches?" Her voice trembled and she spoke with more bitterness than Hugh had ever seen her display before.

"Pardon me, Virginia, for my hastiness, but the truth is, I do not feel as you do and much of your self-denial is sheer madness to me."

"Let us drop the subject now and forever more, Hugh, because we can never agree," Virginia returned.

"Well, I'll try never to speak of it again, but I feel very much out of place in this array. Perhaps you would like me to change it?"

"Oh, no, you will find others dressed as you are. I shall figure as the oddity, of course."

Here, then was the secret of Virginia's changed appearance, Hugh thought to himself as he took his seat beside her in the carriage, and the old spirit of annoyance was apparent in his manner in spite of his effort to conceal it. The party, to which they had both looked forward eagerly, was, in a measure, spoiled by the unfortunate incident.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE history of the human race is virtually a record of the wars which have been waged by its members upon each other. Great men have flashed like mighty meteors across the sky, leaving a shining track that will gleam adown the ages; empires in their westward course have risen, flourished, declined and fallen; whole races have sprung up, fulfilled their mission and become extinct; all through the instrumentality of war. Political parties, clans, tribes, nations, religions, yea, even that supreme religion whose watchword and precept is love for God and for mankind, have all ridden to victory over the slain bodies of their adversaries. There is an occasional lull in hostilities when pride and passion have spent their fury for a time, and the optimist dares hope the era of arbitration has arrived when "swords shall be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks." Alas! it has too often proven but the pause of the tiger who crouches ere he leaps, to gather new strength by the tension of his muscles and to calculate with greater certainty the distance and direction of his victim.

We should expect in the infancy of the race, when might was right, to find men fighting out their differences; but we should also be justified in the hope that with the advancement of civilization, the progress of enlightenment, and the development of a lofty religious ideal, the pursuits of war would languish. On the contrary, with each succeeding age, the weapons of warfare become more formidable and the demand more peremptory for stupendous navies and large standing armies.

There have been wars personal, wars political, wars religious, wars of conquest and wars for redress of

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grievances, civil wars and wars between alien nations, but unique among them all is the mighty conflict which for four years rent and tore the great Republic and left it mangled and bleeding and prostrate.

Our Civil War was peculiar in the universality of the interest it excited. The possibility of self-government was on trial before the world and, in the face of the vacillating and unstable condition that had prevailed in the French government during the first half of the nineteenth century, the successful issue of the war of the Rebellion must have given a check to the progress of free institutions which many decades could not have overcome; monarchism, laughing in its sleeve, would have cried out, "I told you so," and forthwith tightened its grip upon the nations of the eastern hemisphere.

The Civil War was peculiar in this respect, that it not only involved people of the same race and nationality, but the antagonists were of the same political and social status and they embraced the masses of the people. The French Revolution was a civil war, but it was between the nobles on one side and the communes on the other; the Wars of the Roses were civil conflicts, but they were confined to the contending royal houses and their adherents among the nobility, to the almost absolute exclusion of the common people—so much so, we are told, that the peasant laboring in his field only glanced up at the band of troopers riding by and wondered "what was in the wind to-day."

In the question that gave rise to the Rebellion, it was also an unusual war. No theory of personal right or individual oppression entered into the contest, and all parties were agreed that the government was ideal for the protection of its citizens. From its very inception there had been a difference of opinion as to the nature of the Union, one construction delegating supreme authority to

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the Federal Government and advocating the highest allegiance of the citizen to that power; the other, zealously claiming the same prerogative for the several states themselves. These two theories were each supported by arguments pro and con and each had, originally, its adherents throughout the nation, both in the north and in the south. As time passed on and a great question arose, of extreme personal import to one section, but studied and discussed in its moral and religious aspect by the other section, the two theories of government began to fix themselves within territorial boundaries. Federalism gradually permeated the whole fabric of the non-slave-holding states, while the doctrine of states' rights and secession grew apace in the states where that institution existed. As in all revolutions and reforms, fanatics and demagogues fanned the flame of party spirit in the minds of cooler-headed citizens until North and South stood pitted against each other in the most bitter and frenzied hatred. The war was an inevitable consequence. There was no other solution of the problem and, while it was an awful baptism of blood and misery and devastation and woe for the infant nation, yet it has proven itself the missing corner stone which rendered the foundation of the American Republic unassailable. There can never again be a doubt as to the nature of the tie that binds us. No state or section will ever again attempt to sever itself from this union, but until, in our degeneracy, we are overthrown by some external power in its pristine integrity, we shall remain "like the billows many, like the ocean, one."

Last of all, and above all, the Civil War was not only unique but most extraordinary in the circumstances that followed it. In no instance can we find the victor and the vanquished returning to their homes to take up the arts of peace and the pursuits of industrial life in the same spirit of submission to the decision of arms that was

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everywhere demonstrated by the ex-soldiers of this conflict on either side. Union veterans left their fallen comrades, friends and brothers asleep 'neath southern skies and came back to their neglected shops and dilapidated farms to try, by renewed zeal and more energetic labor, to regain the losses of four long years. The remnant of Confederate forces laid down their arms and, dejected and despondent at sight of the black desolation which met their view where once comfortable and elegant homes and prosperous plantations had smiled upon them, stood still for a brief space, paralyzed with grief and helplessness; then began that *true* reconstruction process which reclaimed the land with such marvelous celerity and gave impetus to the "New South," compared with which the old regime was but a shadow. Nor can an instance be found where the leaders of an unsuccessful rebellion were treated with the clemency that was shown to the civil and military chiefs of the Confederacy. With unprecedented rapidity the philanthropic maxim of the hero of the war, "malice toward none and charity for all" became the guiding principle of the land, so that, a few years ago, both in the North and in the South, a smile of mingled scorn and humor met the insinuations of Spanish publications that dissensions still cloud our skies and impending insurrections in the South demand the constant watch-care of our standing armies.

Such was the nature of that war which was in its zenith in the summer of 1863. Bull Run and Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Vicksburg were in the past and a Confederate army under General Bragg lay encamped about Chattanooga awaiting the approach of the Federal forces under General Rosecrans. To this camp came Virginia Lee and Hugh Cunningham in response to an invitation from the commander, accompanied by a small party from the town and its vicinity.

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Jerry, as a gentleman of military experience, was allowed to attend the expedition and he and Sam made room between them on the driver's seat for Sallie, whose joy was unbounded when "young missus," after some hesitation, permitted her to go in case she promised the most absolute meekness and decorum in her manner. The required promise being given with trembling delight and invocations of the greatest calamities upon her own head if she failed to keep it in the smallest degree, she made herself ready and mounted her seat long before the appointed hour.

At last Virginia and Hugh themselves appeared and soon they were rolling away in high glee, stopping on the way to take in other young people until the carriage was full, and then hastening to join a similar company at the home of Nell Taylor who had engaged to take the remainder of the party.

It was a gala day for them all, an event long to be remembered, for it was not often the young men and women of a quiet Tennessee town were the invisted guests of one of the greatest commanders in the Confederate army.

"Hugh, I suppose this is not much of a novelty and pleasure to you?" said Nell Taylor, glancing over her shoulder at Hugh as she stepped into her own carriage.

"On the contrary, it is all novel and pleasant to me so far," Hugh answered.

"But it will not be new to you at the camp. That's the advantage that we who are not in the army have over you," said Annie Baker, a pretty little blonde who sat by his side. Hugh smiled at the thought of *this* being the advantage of those "who are not in the army," but he only answered pleasantly:

"It will be altogether new to me to take my supper with the commanding general at his quarters, I assure you, Annie."

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"Why, Jerry told our Ned that you often dined with General Lee himself!" she exclaimed, her great blue eyes opening wide in surprise.

"You must not rely too implicitly on Jerry's tales. I never spoke to General Lee in my life," Hugh replied, laughing at her amazement.

"Jerry!" she cried, leaning far out of the carriage to make that culprit hear her, "didn't you tell Ned that Captain Cunningham had dined many a time with General Lee in Virginia?"

"Clar t' goodness, Miss Annie, dunno's I'se seed Ned Baker sence I come back f'om de wa'"—adding as an afterthought, "I s'posed he'd don' lef' wid de res' de free niggahs 'roun' heah!"

To Sam and Sallie he continued in an undertone, "Well, if 'e didn' 'twas hissef 'e had to blame, fer de Gin'l don' ax 'im times out'n number to come to dine an' once, aftah Gettysbu'g whar I rescued Marse Hugh so brave right in de face ob de cannon, he say, 'bring Jerry too w'en you come!' " And now it was Sam's and Sallie's turn to open their eyes with wonder and bow lower than ever before this mighty man.

Passing quickly through the town, the party came soon to a long stretch of level road, preferring a drive of a little more than two miles, thus making a detour of a ridge of high hills, to a shorter journey directly over the steep ascent of the highlands.

The way was made short by merry jokes and songs and laughter until, coming upon the brow of a hill, the first glimpse of the camp met their view, stretching far away through the valley and up the slopes of the hills beyond. Cheers and cries of delight burst from every member of the party and some one shouted loudly to the drivers to stop.

"What a glorious thing to be the commander of a host

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like that!" Virginia exclaimed. "If I were a man, I'd sacrifice everything else for such a privilege."

"I believe it," said Nell Taylor, "and you'd be a host within yourself, Virginia, because you are so brave and true."

"You know not what you say, Virginia," Hugh said kindly. "You have no idea of the hardships of such a life."

"No, Nell," Virginia said in answer to the first remark, "If I succeeded, it would be because my heart and soul are in the cause and my whole life would be devoted to it." Turning to Hugh she added, "The very hardships, it seems to me, would be but a spur to urge the true soldier on to greater efforts."

"It's no use to argue the question with her, Hugh," said Ray Andrews, a young man in the Lee carriage. "She means what she says and I almost believe she could do it if she were a man." He was extremely young, for all save the extremely young men were in this or some distant camp and he doted upon Virginia of all persons.

A drive of a few minutes brought them to the foot of the hill where they were met by a committee of young officers by whom they were cordially greeted, for a variation of this sort was as welcome to soldiers who had just been going through weeks of inactivity in camp as to the visitors themselves. Having been conducted to the presence of General Bragg and his staff, a short time was spent in greetings and introductions and then the host proposed to show the party about the headquarters, remarking casually that he wished to initiate the ladies into all the mysteries of a soldier's life so that in future years when women should have attained their rights, eight of them, at least, would be prepared for their duties.

"But *then* the Confederacy will be established and southern women are not clamoring for the ballot," Nell

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Taylor replied, winning such applause that the general acknowledged himself vanquished, but said he would venture to show them the quarters, then, as a mere matter of pastime. Walking up to Virginia, whom he greatly admired for the ability with which she had managed her father's business affairs and for her devotion to the Confederacy, he offered her his arm, with a low bow, turning to Hugh to say apologetically:

"Will you loan her to an old man for a little while, Cunningham?"

With ready wit and the chivalric spirit of a true southern gentleman, Hugh replied: "Would that I might claim the right to 'loan' her to you, General. I shall make a pleasant tour of the place with your aide-de-camp, by his leave," in response to a gesture of invitation from that individual.

The younger officers present having quickly made agreeable arrangements with the remainder of the party, they began an inspection of an ideal soldier's home. Everything was in order, for General Bragg was as exacting in this respect as the model housekeeper. From the council room, where the commander received his subordinates to plan those campaigns and battles that had hitherto been measurably successful and which now served as reception room, to the very stalls where the handsome chargers of the army chiefs were groomed and cared for as if they were in the stables of the millionaire, there was no spot that was not scrupulously neat and clean.

"Do you keep it like this on common days or is it fixed up to-day for company?" Annie Baker asked saucily as she stood near General Bragg watching busy hands preparing the evening meal.

"The true soldier knows no common day and no holiday, Miss Baker," was the grave response.

"Does he mean he does keep it so on common days?"

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she whispered to her escort whose youth and inferior rank put her more at her ease than she felt with the general, who was unintentionally a little austere in his reply.

"Yes, it is always so," the young man answered. "Every man under his command performs his daily tasks as he values his position and his honor."

"That accounts for the congeniality between him and Virginia," Annie said shrewdly. "That's the way she manages at Lee's Summit."

"Miss Lee seems to be a remarkable young woman," was the reply. "We hear she is to marry Captain Cunningham."

"Oh, I don't know. There is a sort of general understanding to that effect, but Virginia is a girl with a mind of her own."

"Then you think she may not be as anxious as some girls would be about a catch like that? They say he is rich."

"'Rich' and 'poor' don't mean anything to Virginia," Annie explained. "Money has been so absolutely no part of any question in her life that she never reckons on that basis at all."

"Then you think they are not engaged?"

"No, I am sure they are not."

"I inferred as much from his remark to the general a while ago."

"Yes, I noticed that, too," Annie said, "and while Hugh spoke jestingly, yet he meant what he said."

By this time the headquarters had been thoroughly "done" and someone suggested a drive about the camp in the remaining hour before supper. The guests in their carriages, accompanied by the commander and a half dozen of his subordinates on horseback, prepared to carry out the suggestion. This was made possible by the regularity with which the camp was laid out. The tents

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were pitched in squares with streets sufficiently wide for narrow driveways, each square being assigned to the members of a company. Away down the valley as far as the eye could see, white tents gleamed in the evening sun, while up the slopes of the hills they were similarly arranged as far as the nature of the ground would permit. Our little company rode for more than a mile into the midst of this strange city, stopping here and there to watch the preparations for supper or to speak to some squad of soldiers sent out on special duties. One company from Alabama had just received several boxes of provisions from home and they were gathered about watching, with eager faces and hilarious voices, the distribution of the contents. Dismounting, General Bragg signified to the guests to alight and they moved among the delighted soldiers, congratulating them and speaking words of cheer to them. A little apart from his comrades sat a youthful looking boy with a small hamper open by his side. In his hand he held a letter which he had evidently been reading. There was an expression of the most painful dejection and homesickness on his countenance. He attracted Virginia's attention and she stood for some moments regarding him with interest and sympathy and wishing she might speak to him. At length she approached General Bragg and pointed the boy out to him. General Bragg was a kind-hearted man, notwithstanding his brusque manner, and he walked over and laid his hand on the boy's arm, saying gently:

"What's wrong, my lad, why do you not eat? I see you have a well-filled basket of tempting food."

The boy looked up with a sorry smile, gratified and pleased by this sympathy from his commander.

"I can't eat now, it chokes me so," he replied with tears in his voice. "Perhaps to-morrow I'll be all right

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and then I'll divide with some of the fellows and we'll have a merry meal."

"Isn't it pitiful?" said Virginia as they turned away. "When will all this be over, General?"

"Not for a long time, I fear. Not until many a lad like this has sighed for home and mother for the last time," he answered sadly.

Looking at his watch, General Bragg declared there was only time for them to return before the supper hour and, as no one was ever late here, of course sightseeing was for the present at an end.

At supper the commander sat at the head of the table. He motioned Hugh to take the seat at his right, saying that as a representative of the Army of Virginia he must be considered the guest of honor. Virginia sat at his left, while others were arranged according to the rank of the officer. Virginia was pleased to see Hugh enter with enthusiasm into a private talk with the host concerning the army from which he came, the battles in which he had fought, the success already attained in the East, and the prospect for the future. Hugh found, after all, that he had some interests in common with General Bragg.

After supper there was a review of troops for the entertainment of the guests, which consumed the remainder of their time. At its close, dusk was fast settling over the valley and the carriages were reluctantly ordered for departure. General Bragg thanked the young ladies for this bright spot in an otherwise monotonous week, saying that the "waiting time" is the hardest time of all in the life of a soldier.

"What are you waiting for?" asked Annie Baker innocently.

"For Rosecrans and the Federal army," the General replied.

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"How many men have you here, General Bragg?" Nell Taylor asked with a wave of her hand in the direction of the tents.

"Scarcely nine thousand."

"Nine thousand!" another young lady exclaimed. "Why, they say in the village that you have near fifty thousand."

"That means all together. You must understand that what you see here is but a small part of the entire army?" he explained.

"Where are the others?" Annie Baker chimed in.

"Well, in various places," he answered, smiling. "Over on the other side of those hills in the next valley there are more than ten thousand. A mile or more south of here there is another large army, and yet another down on _____ creek."

"With all that force you can surely hold the village, don't you think?" Virginia asked anxiously.

"I hope to do so," was the reply. "In any event, if we find it advisable to evacuate the village, on those heights over yonder," motioning toward Lookout and Missionary Ridge, "I can hold my ground in the face of any force the Federal army can spare to send against me."

"How glad I am to hear you say that!" exclaimed Virginia. "I am often urged to leave the plantation and go to Atlanta, but so long as you feel secure here, I shall not do it."

"Do not modify your plans by what I say, Virginia. We are all subject to errors. I only hope I am not mistaken in this and I have great confidence in our strength."

"Then mother and I shall stay where we are for the present, at least."

After a few minutes of additional small talk, the guests at last succeeded in finishing their adieus and departed. On the hill-top they stopped to take a farewell look at the

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scene below. To their surprise and great delight, they saw the entire camp illuminated by scores of blazing fires. It was a cool night, such as sometimes come in the latter part of August, and the host had ordered this demonstration as a parting salute to the young guests as well as to give them an idea of soldier life about the camp fire.

They tarried long, talking over the events of the afternoon, rapt in that thrilling emotion which a military spectacle always inspires. When they felt they could stay no longer, they gave three hearty cheers for the Confederacy, the camp, and its commander, and then dropping below the crest of the hill, returned once more to everyday life.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Hugh and Virginia reached home, they found that Mr. Lee, contrary to his last message, had been given an opportunity to leave Richmond for a few days and had arrived at Lee's Summit during their absence. The familiar tones of his voice came to them from the veranda as the carriage stopped, and Virginia bounded joyfully up the steps with the glad cry:

"Father! father! you wrote us you could not come."

"You see, I thought by taking you unawares I might catch you napping and get a chance to scold you soundly," he replied, affectionately returning her embrace.

"Ah! daddy, you know me too well for that," she said.

"You may be sure I do, my child," Mr. Lee returned, the jesting gone from his voice and manner.

With this, he turned to Hugh and grasped his hand warmly as he said: "It seems good to see you here, Hugh. There was a day when I feared I might never greet you like this again. I telegraphed for tidings of you after Gettysburg but could get no satisfactory reply."

"Thank you, Mr. Lee. It was very kind of all of you to think of me as you did—and very kind of fate to reserve me for the pleasant visit I have had these two weeks," Hugh replied.

"Been enjoying it, have you? I'm glad of that. You'll fight all the better for it when you go back."

Hugh didn't wince at mention of his return for there was no longer any question about it. He had long ago determined to go back and the subject of a substitute had not been spoken of since the evening of his arrival. He was very much in love with Virginia and, since the occasion of Nell Taylor's party, he had guarded himself

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so carefully that the most exacting girl could have found no cause for complaint. He had talked with her seriously concerning the war whenever that seemed to be her mood and at no time had he spoken lightly of her opinion or of her actions with regard to it. He would return to his place in the army and remain with it to the end. He knew she would never care for him if he did not go and he half hoped he might win her if he did go. At all events, it was worth trying.

"Why, father, he doesn't need to fight any better. Hugh was one of the very best soldiers in the Army of Virginia, the papers all said so, "Virginia said with a ring of approval in her voice that was gratifying to Hugh. "He will tell you all about it later on, but first we must hear how you happen to be with us to-night. I know you didn't write us you could not come just for the sake of surprising us."

"No, daughter, I did not," he answered gravely. Indeed, Mr. Lee had acquired a certain seriousness rarely noticed in his manner in the olden days. "I had no hope of getting away from Richmond at the time I last wrote your mother, but there has been very grave business under consideration and messages had to be brought to General Bragg which could not be entrusted to paper. President Davis selected me to come on this mission and hence my presence here to-night."

"How glad we are, too," Virginia replied. "It seems like such a long time since you were here and there are so many things I need to talk with you about."

Something more than the mere pleasure of joyous welcome sounded in Virginia's voice. There was also the sense of relief which one feels when a heavy burden is shifted for a time from one's own to other, stronger shoulders.

"My coming cannot be a greater pleasure to any one

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else than it is to me, Virginia," Mr. Lee returned, reaching out his hand and taking hers in expression of the tender sympathy her very tone inspired. "This life away from home is growing most monotonous. I sometimes feel that our lot at Richmond is worse, even, than service in the field would be. We work and scheme and plan and then wait for others to carry out the plans and things often seem to move slowly and results are often discouraging."

"Why, father, are you despondent now? I don't like your tone and I thought General Bragg looked troubled at times this afternoon. Do you think we are in danger?" Virginia asked anxiously."

"Oh, I can hardly tell, my dear. Of course we must not be discouraged for that would be fatal to us. We have had numerous reverses lately that make the sky look dark for us just now, but you know the vicissitudes of war are most uncertain. In another month the whole face of things may be changed."

"What is the feeling at Richmond now, Mr. Lee?" asked Hugh.

"Well, the southern people are naturally inclined to be hopeful and the speeches in public are buoyant and full of the spirit which General Lee expressed when he said, 'We cannot hope always to win great victories.' But the loss of General Jackson, the failure of the invasion of Pennsylvania, and the fall of Vicksburg cannot but cause great uneasiness in every southern heart. How did you find the camp? And what does Bragg say of the prospect?"

Together Hugh and Virginia recounted the incidents of their visit, dwelling upon what the commander had said as to the strength of his position in the mountains about Chattanooga and the probability of his being able to withstand the Federal army.

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"Oh, if I were only a man!" Virginia exclaimed. "It seems so tame to sit and look on when I'd so love to do something that would help."

"You do all that could be expected of you, Virginia, and more, when you stay here and look after the place as you have done for two years. You can leave the fighting for Hugh who seems able to do full justice to it. I am hoping to see him promoted to an important command ere long," said Mr. Lee.

"No, Mr. Lee, do not expect too much of me. I have attained as high rank as I am capable of holding. When there is a position to be guarded or a stronghold to be charged, I am well enough, but I have no interest and no ability in the line of managing a battle or planning a campaign."

"As to that, I fear we have too many heads planning already," was the reply.

"Why? Do you think our affairs are not being managed well?" asked Virginia.

"I think it would be better if General Lee were made Commander-in-chief of the military department and the direction of the entire army given over to him. He is in a position to know more concerning the proper conduct of the war than any other man, but he is hindered always by the restrictions placed upon him at Richmond, while he has no authority to dictate what shall be done in any part of the field except his own."

"What will become of us here in the South if we fail, Thomas?" Mrs. Lee asked helplessly.

"God knows, Margaret," Mr. Lee replied reverently. "No one can imagine the evils that will surround us if we fail. However, we shall have ourselves to blame, in great measure. My sympathies are with the Confederacy, but we have precipitated upon our own heads the calamities that are sure to follow our defeat."

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"Don't talk so, I cannot bear to hear it," Virginia exclaimed, indignant and grieved at her father's words. "Are we not in the right and why should we not resist oppression and injustice?"

"It is not altogether a question of right," Mr. Lee replied. "I fear we were rash to attempt secession when we did, because we were not prepared to sustain ourselves. I said so all along and there has never been a time when I did not doubt the wisdom of the step. However, there is no use falling back to that position. We are into the fight and we must all work together to make the best of it. How much more time do you have here, Hugh?" he asked, dismissing a subject that always brought a shadow of care to his brow.

"I leave day after to-morrow."

"So soon? It is well I didn't tarry in Richmond or I should have missed you."

"I am due August 31st, and I must leave here by the evening of the 29th, you know."

"I am sorry for that. I hoped we should have several days here together, but of course I would not detain you from your duty."

Mr. Lee and Hugh spent the greater part of the next day on horseback, visiting distant fields of the Lee's Summit plantation which Hugh had not seen for years and, late in the afternoon, riding over to Cunningham Place where desolation and ruin confronted them on every hand.

The man who had purchased the place, found himself unable to retain the slaves in his employ and, disgusted with his bargain, he had left the neighborhood months before. Fields and garden and yard were overgrown with weeds and the buildings, which had been used as places of refuge for straggling bands of soldiers, were so dilapidated that even Hugh could scarcely recognize them except by their location.

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"Do you remember, Mr. Lee, a sort of half jest, half earnest understanding there used to be between your family and ours as to the union of these two pieces of land if such an arrangement should be satisfactory to Virginia and me when we were grown up?" Hugh asked as he stood with Mr. Lee looking over the neglected fields.

Mr. Lee regarded Hugh with a twinkle in his eye, but with a kindly smile as he replied, "Yes, Hugh, I believe I remember something of the kind."

"Well, as you know," Hugh continued, "the estate which would have been mine has passed into the hands of strangers and, had it not, it lies before you a wilderness of weeds. So far as that part of the understanding is concerned, I can never fulfill it. You must also know, however, that the really vital part of the old arrangement, is not only satisfactory to me, but very greatly to be desired." Hugh's manner was the least bit labored and unnatural but he continued bravely, "Should Virginia regard the question in the same light, would the consummation of the agreement be satisfactory to you and Mrs. Lee?"

"It is hard work, I know, Hugh, to ask a man for his only daughter, and it should be—it should be," Mr. Lee said earnestly, "for it is asking a great deal. As for Mrs. Lee and myself, we shall be satisfied with whatever arrangement Virginia may choose to make. I have sometimes fancied that she was not much inclined to marry either you or any other man, but you can try your luck, my boy, and if you succeed you shall have my approval and my blessing, but remember, I do nothing to influence her. I only acquiesce in what she says."

"Do not suppose I fail to realize the difficulties before me in that direction, Mr. Lee," Hugh said laughingly, adding more seriously, "I know my own limitations and appreciate the fact that I am in many ways no match for

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Virginia, but I am selfish enough to want her nevertheless."

"So far as the financial part of that early compact is concerned, you understand, Hugh, that a few months more may put Virginia greatly at disadvantage," said Mr. Lee.

"You know me too well to suppose that could make any difference. I should then be more thankful than ever that father has placed our affairs in a condition which this war cannot affect," Hugh answered.

It was nearing sunset now and the two men turned their faces homeward. Conversation lagged by the way for each was sufficiently occupied with his own thoughts.

Virginia stood on the veranda steps with a fine bouquet of roses in her hand when she saw her father and Hugh turning into the lawn. She waited for Hugh to join her. "So you have been over to the old place, have you? I was sorry when I found you had gone there, I am afraid it will make you sad, Hugh." As she said this she laid her hand gently on Hugh's arm. It was the nearest approach to a caress she had given him since their childhood, and it touched him as nothing else could have done. Taking the hand in his own, he answered fondly, "It compensates me for any sadness I may have felt to know that you sympathize with me, Virginia."

Virginia perceived the mistake and, quickly withdrawing her hand, she held the roses up playfully for Hugh to catch their fragrance and then, turning, passed on into the house to arrange the bouquet for the supper table.

Hugh and Virginia had planned a drive into the village in the evening that Hugh might say good-bye to the Taylors, and the little phaeton stood ready for them when they came out from supper. Virginia ran up to her room for her hat and gloves and quickly joined Hugh who stood waiting on the lawn and who now handed her

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gently to her seat. There was a softened air in their bearing toward each other, for already the shadows of parting were gathering about them and in those days such shadows gathered with unusual gloom about the departing soldier and his friends.

They spun along swiftly enough until they reached the river road when, turning into it, Hugh suddenly reined the horses to a slower gait.

"The longest way round is the nearest way there,' you know," he said, laughing, "and besides, Virginia, it may be a very long time before I see this road again—possibly I may never drive here again," he added gravely.

"Oh, yes, Hugh," Virginia returned with assumed gaiety, "You'll come back before many months, covered all over with glory and badges and gold medals."

"Ah! Virginia, there is a reward I'd prize far above badges and gold medals," he said tenderly. "Do you know what it is?"

"Yes, I think I do," she answered slowly.

He waited a moment for her to say more but as she did not, he spoke again in an earnest tone.

"Have you still nothing to say about this reward I wish so much to win, Virginia? You know that I love you, that I never knew what it was not to love you. There's no occasion for me to dwell upon that. In a remote corner of my heart I cherish you beside the image of my dead mother."

"Don't speak of your mother, Hugh," Virginia answered pleadingly. "That always arouses the old pity of my childhood for you and pity, you know, is not love."

"No, but it is akin to love and even that means something to me," Hugh returned earnestly with a motion so suggestive of an embrace that Virginia, startled, shrank back into the farthest corner of the seat.

It was enough. Hugh checked the impulse and con-

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tinued in a more formal manner, "After almost two years of separation are you any nearer a decision than when I last talked to you about my love? I had not meant to speak of this now, but as the time draws near for me to leave I feel as if I cannot go without asking you once more to give me some word of encouragement."

"Yes, I believe I am nearer a decision, Hugh. I admire you in many ways and I am very, very fond of you," she replied in a tone half earnest, half apologetic.

"Well, Virginia, I'll be satisfied with that for the present if you can give me the least bit of encouragement to try to win a stronger regard than that from you."

"I am trying hard to give you the best there is in me," she answered. "I am afraid I am not capable of a very strong affection of this kind. I tell you frankly that I do not feel as I imagine a woman should feel in promising a man to marry him."

"I try to imagine sometimes how it would seem to be actually engaged to you," he said, after looking very earnestly into her face for a moment. "I am perfectly sure I could go back to the army happy if I might take with me your promise to be my wife when the war is over. I could stay willingly and fight bravely all the while if I had the assurance that after all is over I should have you for the rest of my life."

"I have not much doubt that it will be so, Hugh. I really expect that, eventually, we shall be married, for I can scarcely imagine such a thing as dropping you out of my life entirely. But whenever I think of giving you a *promise*, a vague feeling of some sort comes over me that some way admonishes me to wait. It is probably a mere fancy, but it is hard for me to put it from me."

"I wonder if it is because I have sometimes been harsh with you and fault-finding, Virginia? I am sorry for all that, and I'll try not to show that spirit any more. Are

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you afraid I might be unkind to you? Is that the strange feeling, Virginia?"

"Oh, no, no, Hugh. I am sure you would not be unkind. I have no fear of that. So far as our little differences are concerned, I am learning to overlook those for I suppose all people have them. I do not regard them at all except as they may indicate a lack of absolute congeniality. What I fear is that my affection for you is more such as I might have had for a brother than such as I should have for a husband. I feel certain no other man could ever seem so much like their own son to father and mother as you do even now, Hugh."

"I spoke to your father this afternoon on the subject," Hugh said.

"What did he say?" she asked quickly.

"He said it should be left entirely with you, that he would acquiesce in your decision," was the candid reply.

"What a perfect old dear father is. I am sure it would be a satisfaction to him for me to decide in your favor," she said, adding after a brief silence, "I'll tell you, Hugh, give me until to-morrow and I will answer you definitely. To-night I will think of it seriously and earnestly and before you leave to-morrow I will decide. Indeed, I know of no reason why we may not as well have the question settled before you go away again. It will probably mean greater peace of mind for us both."

"It seems as though I should be content with that and yet I almost dread to hear the decision. An indefinite hope is better than a definite despair," he replied, dejectedly.

They were before Nell Taylor's home now, and for two or three minutes had sat talking, making no motion toward alighting. Having been discovered from the house, they were now surrounded by a number of their young

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friends who had assembled to meet Hugh for the last time.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee were on the veranda as usual when Hugh and Virginia reached home, but, as it was growing late, they tarried for only a few minutes and then parted for the night.

When the young girl reached her room she partially undressed, and, throwing on a loose robe, sat down by a window where she could look out into the night and get the benefit of the cool breeze. She had a hard question to decide, and she determined to look it squarely in the face.

Hugh was a good fellow, morally, she said to herself, which could not be said of every man; he was southern by early adoption, and his sympathies were with the South; she had known him all her life, and he was, in the main, agreeable to her; he loved her, of that she felt sure, and it counted for a great deal; and, above all, her parents were fond of him, and he would fall into place in the family as no one else ever could.

On the other hand, she reasoned, he always fell short of her expectations in earnestness and determination of purpose; he was lacking in the very mental qualities she admired most in men; she did not truly love him as a husband should be loved; but then, she argued, she might never see a man with the qualities she admired, or, if he had those qualities, he might be deficient in other ways; no one could be perfect, and, perhaps, it was perfection she was looking for. Probably, after all, a strong attachment and an abiding confidence were the safest ties between husband and wife, and that these existed in an extraordinary degree between herself and the playmate of her childhood, she had no doubt. It was not difficult to reason away all her objections except the one fact that she recoiled from giving Hugh a definite promise of marriage.

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Again and again she settled the vexed question and arose to make her preparations for the night; again and again some fresh argument presented itself and she returned to her station by the window to go all over her reasoning once more. Now, she had fully reconciled herself to giving the desired promise, and she walked resolutely to the mirror and began to loosen the heavy coils of dark hair. She smiled at the picture, lifting some of the long, waving locks and admiring them in an absent-minded way. Once she almost imagined she saw a strong, earnest face with grave grey eyes looking over her shoulder in the mirror, but she put the picture indignantly from her mind. What was a strong, earnest face, what were grave grey eyes, when they belonged to a man who was fighting against—actually *fighting against*—the cause she loved? It was an insult to Hugh's loyalty and self-sacrifice that such a thought should even suggest itself to her.

And now a sudden shrinking came over her. She recalled that significant gesture of Hugh's along the river road. If she consented to marry him, would he not expect to take her in his arms and caress her as lovers do in books? She saw the question in an altogether new light. Indeed, such a procedure would not be proper, for the time was so far away when she would be his wife. "That would be a good excuse," she thought, as she drew the brush caressingly over the hair spread out upon her shoulder. But then, she argued again, would she not hesitate about offering an excuse? Would it not seem like a half-hearted promise after all? Again she thought how different this was from all her dreams of a betrothal. She dropped into her chair by the window to "think it out" once more.

No, she couldn't do it, she decided this time. She was sure she didn't love Hugh in the right way at all. There

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must be something more than this in the passion or why had certain of her friends been so extravagantly happy in their marriages? She had no eager anticipations such as many of them had shown. "Maybe, though, they were easily elated," she said to herself. "Light natures are easily satisfied, of course." On the other hand, she recalled the days of Edith Warren's wedding preparations and the weeks succeeding her marriage. She had never, in all her life, seen a woman seem so perfectly happy; and Edith was not weak, indeed, she was one of the finest characters she had ever known. Yes, she would tell Hugh to-morrow that it would not be just to either of them for her to marry him, and beg him to forget her and to turn his thoughts to some one who could love him as he deserved. Now, there was Kittie Chester. What a pity he had not loved her. She was admirably suited to his style and she would have given him the whole devotion of her childish little heart. It was the irony of fate for him to disregard adoration like that and spend year after year suing for a love as hard to win as her own. She had reached a final conclusion now. Hugh would be disappointed but it was best, and she would tell him so to-morrow. She might even suggest Kittie as a panacea for his grief, and she sprang up and began braiding her hair with brisk fingers, a look of determination in her eyes. All went well until she knelt to say her prayer and came, as usual, to ask God's benediction on the soldier boy. She had promised to do this, and she had never neglected it in all the months since Hugh went away. As she spoke his name to-night, a tender sympathy arose in her heart, and she foresaw the unhappiness she was voluntarily preparing for one who was sacrificing so much for her and moulding his life according to her wishes. Then followed another half hour of indecision and argument, until, away

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in the small hours of the night, she went to bed fully determined what she would do.

The next morning at the breakfast table, in the presence of her father and mother, she said bravely:

"Hugh, I have made up my mind, and I want to tell you here where father and mother can give us their approval and their blessing, that if you go back to the war and stay there to the end, be the end what it may, I will marry you when it is over."

This was not just what Hugh had imagined, and he answered, hesitatingly, "Virginia, I was a knave to force this promise from you. Take it back, and if the time ever comes when you can voluntarily promise me, do so. If not, I have but myself to blame for my disappointment."

"No, I have thought it all out since last night, and I want it decided. I believe it will be for the best, and mother and father will be pleased, I know."

Mr. and Mrs. Lee so far listened silently, but now the former interposed, "No, no, daughter, not that. Your course must be purely your own choice without consideration of our wishes."

"O, of course, I know that, father, but I want my choice to be sanctioned by you and mother, and I know Hugh will love you and you will love him almost as if he were your own son. He will compensate, in part, for that son that should have come to you when I did," she said, smiling at them through the tears that shone in her eyes.

"We have been compensated for the loss of him for twenty-one years, Virginia," said Mrs. Lee, lovingly.

"Well, Hugh, I have made my decision and you will see that it will be all right," Virginia said, in a tone that waived all further discussion, glad to have the question disposed of in this matter of fact and *sensible* way.

Her manner waived also all further reference to the

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subject all day, and she managed so skillfully that at no time was she left alone with Hugh.

And so, 'twas done, and Virginia began at once trying to fall naturally into her new role and to become accustomed to the thought that she had given her word, and her word, once given, could not be broken.

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CHAPTER IX.

When Virginia awoke the next morning after Hugh's departure, she was conscious that she had slept later than usual, and even then she lay with her arms thrown above her head in that uncertain state, half-waking, half-sleeping, which often succeeds a night of sound slumber. She felt a restfulness and contentment for which she could not account, and in a kind of dream she imagined she had gone back to the old care-free days before the war. Her heart sank as she remembered the war—that, of course, must continue to hover over her like a Nemesis—but even that did not altogether disturb the calmness that rested upon her spirit.

By-and-by, as consciousness asserted itself, she felt a vague uneasiness that she should be so perilously near to happiness on this, of all mornings. Hugh was gone, and she should feel sad. Hers was certainly very unlike the state of mind an engaged girl would expect to be in with her lover just gone to the war. Was she *glad* Hugh was gone? No, she was quite *sure* she was not glad. She had enjoyed his visit, and it was pleasant in many ways to have him there. No, she was *quite* sure she was not glad he was gone. She was only glad to be relieved of the immediate necessity of being thrown with him until their changed relation should have become an old story. It was her disposition to be opposed to changes and to prefer her usual manner of life. As she thus reasoned with herself, the door opened softly. Aroused by the sound, she raised up to see who the intruder was. It was Sallie with fresh water and towels, and Virginia asked, in a kind of startled tone, "Sallie, am I late this morning?"

"Yes, Miss, it's better'n seven," the negress replied,

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adding, by way of apology for her intrusion, "I didn' go fer to wake young miss up, but las' night I don' fergit yer water an' towels an' I had t' fetch 'em in dis mawnin'."

"What made you forget, Sallie, you seldom do such a thing?" Virginia asked, sleepily.

"Dunno, Miss, 'less 'twas cos Jerry lef' las' night," Sallie answered, in a trembling voice, which made her mistress half wish she might know just the kind of feeling the simple-hearted girl experienced.

"Why, Sallie, did you feel so very sad because Jerry went away?"

"Yes, Miss, I dunno's I'll evah see Jerry agin," and, bursting into tears, she bolted quickly from the room while her young mistress turned languidly over on her pillow, wondering if it were characteristic of deep or of shallow natures to show such sentiment.

In this case, she concluded, it was because Sallie had nothing else to think of. Now, she herself could work up a fever-heat of grief and discontent over Hugh's going—or her father's either, for that matter—if she allowed her mind to dwell upon the danger or the loneliness or the length of time they would be gone. Yes, that was the secret of it all—her mind was occupied by other interests, so she had not time for lamenting and grieving.

When she arose, she made a hasty toilet and hurried downstairs where she found her mother and father just finishing breakfast.

"I hope you are not sick, Virginia?" Mrs. Lee said, looking at her anxiously.

"No, indeed, mother. I never felt better in my life. I was only a little lazy and overslept myself. In fact, I have just been pluming myself on my excellent spirits," and Virginia smiled pleasantly at her parents who exchanged significant glances. The words and manner were a confirmation of the fear Mrs. Lee had confided to her

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husband over night, that circumstances and not the prompting of her own heart had impelled Virginia to the promise she had made Hugh.

"Virginia is the most eccentric girl I ever saw," Mrs. Lee had said to her husband in the privacy of their own room. "I do not like the word, but, positively, I have felt to-day that there was no other to apply to her."

"Why, Margaret, what are you thinking of now?" her husband asked, indifferently.

"Was ever such a betrothal heard of as the one we witnessed this morning? It was not much like our own, Thomas, was it?"

"Ah! but Virginia is not like you, dear, nor like me, so far as that goes. I suppose 'tis as you say, she is *strange* and does nothing just as other girls do," and Mr. Lee deliberately wound his watch and put it back into his vest pocket in an absent-minded way, falling immediately into the brown study which was becoming so habitual with him.

Mrs. Lee noticed his absorption and registered a mental plague upon the war and all connected with it, for Mrs. Lee, like Hugh, saw no occasion for subordinating the most sacred things in life to the war.

"What time was it, Thomas?" she asked, in a disturbed tone, not wishing to let the conversation drop, yet not knowing exactly what to say next.

"It's—I forget, if I looked, which I don't think I did," he answered, taking out the watch to look at it again.

"Yes, Thomas, you looked, but, of course, I didn't expect you to know."

"It's half-past nine," Mr. Lee answered, musingly. "And you say you think the proceedings to-day a trifle irregular, do you?"

"Why, yes, they seemed so to me. Virginia acted unlike herself all day. She avoided Hugh, and she was

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unnatural when he was near her, and I am sure she looked relieved, and felt so, when he was gone."

"'Twas imagination, Margaret, or woman's intuition. I didn't notice anything unusual except the matter-of-fact way the thing was settled at breakfast, and I supposed that arose from the general understanding that has always existed about Hugh and Virginia. It's a little like presenting a friend with a piece of jewelry he has had borrowed for years. There's no novelty in the gift, you know."

"I thought that was the way you looked at it, and I am afraid Hugh regards it in the same light. The truth is, I don't believe Virginia's heart is in this thing at all."

"Why does she do it then? No one has ever urged it upon her," said Mr. Lee.

"Simply because Hugh wishes it and she dislikes to thwart him since he has conducted himself so bravely in the war. The war is getting to be a perfect mania with her, and she sacrifices everything in life to her beloved 'cause.' Then, too, I am afraid she persuaded herself to accept Hugh partly out of consideration for us."

"Well, well, we must look into this. We cannot allow Virginia to sacrifice herself either for us or for the war. You do not think there is any other man in the way, do you?" Mr. Lee scarcely recognized his own voice in the tone of appeal in which he asked this question. In all the ordinary affairs of life, his wife had hidden beneath his love and protection, relying always upon his judgment. In matters of the heart, however, the weakest women reach, by intuition, conclusions that whole years of observation and reasoning could not reveal to men.

"No," Mrs. Lee answered, a little scornfully. "Of course there is no other man in the way or she could not have promised so coolly to marry Hugh."

"That seems reasonable enough," was the reply. "You

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women, Margaret, must have a sixth sense that reveals these things to you."

"Not at all, my dear. It is unnecessary to have an extra sense to comprehend a thing that is plain as day."

This was, in substance, the conversation that had aroused in Mr. Lee's mind a doubt as to the wisdom of his daughter's promising to marry Hugh.

As Virginia took her seat at the table, her father asked gravely, "Daughter, do you think you weighed the question as seriously as you should before making a compact with Hugh that will affect your whole life?"

"Yes, I think I did. I have thought of it in a general way for years; it has been in my mind most of the time since Hugh came back, and I spent nearly the whole of night before last arguing it with myself. That accounts for my sleepiness this morning," she added, smiling.

"Well, you have at least not acted without due consideration." The words were addressed to his daughter, but Mr. Lee looked appealingly at his wife to see what opinion her face betrayed.

"It only proves to me that Virginia has not the proper affection for Hugh," Mrs. Lee said sagely. "It didn't take me whole days and nights and weeks and years to decide about you, Thomas."

"Of course not," Virginia said hastily, "but it isn't every girl who has a chance to marry a man like father," reaching across the corner of the table to pat Mr. Lee's hand affectionately. "And after all, folks, it's all right about the compact," she added soberly. "It's probably what I should do in the end—marrying Hugh, I mean—and why not promise him now? He went away much happier than if I had not done so. Let us not discuss it any more, please. If you are satisfied with the engagement, I am, and we have more important things to think

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and talk about just now. Do you go to the camp to-day?" addressing her father.

"Yes, immediately," answered Mr. Lee, rising from the table.

"Invite General Bragg to come out for supper with us one evening before you leave," said Mrs. Lee.

"Yes, father, do," Virginia urged. "I want to be reassured about staying here and I know General Bragg will see as I do."

"All right. Do not look for me before dinner to-day. I may not get back until late in the afternoon," and he hurried out, leaving his wife and daughter to a quiet day by themselves.

But General Bragg had graver work in hand than visiting with his friends. The "waiting time" was almost over and the contest for the possession of Chattanooga was fast approaching a crisis. So Mr. Lee reported when he returned home late in the evening. He had spent the day at the camp in close consultation with the commander and his advisers, and he informed his family that the greater part of his sojourn at home would doubtless be spent in the same way. The importance of holding this point was keenly realized by all southern sympathizers.

In the first place, it was the key to the very heart of the Confederacy and its possession would open the way for the Union army to sweep like a great flood over the southern states. Friends of the secession movement stood aghast at the prospect, while they were clamorously upbraided by its enemies for having been the cause of a situation so perilous.

In the next place, the loss of Chattanooga would involve the utter demoralization of the forces stationed there, which would be most disastrous as they were, next to the Army of Virginia, the main stay of the Con-

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federacy. Lastly, but perhaps equally important, a defeat here and now, following closely upon the reverses so recently experienced, would be succeeded by a general despondency and a consequent irretrievable loss in moral and material support of the Confederate cause. It was plainly evident the place must be held or the conflict given up.

Something of this Mr. Lee explained to Virginia in answer to her anxious inquiries.

"But General Bragg seemed very confident of success when we were at the camp," she said questioningly.

"He is confident now, a little more so than the situation justifies, I am afraid," her father replied.

"Has he had any further information since the day we were there?"

"O, yes, scouts and stragglers report that Rosecrans has apportioned his forces among his generals and they are approaching everywhere on the west and south. Word has been brought to him that Knoxville will prove an easy prey to Burnside and, in case that place is lost, our communication with the East will be altogether cut off. Messages and reinforcements can only be sent by way of Atlanta then, involving the most harassing disappointment and delay."

"How fortunate Hugh got away in time to make his connections all right," Mrs. Lee interposed.

"I shouldn't be surprised if there'd be trouble for me by the last of the week," said Mr. Lee. "And, Margaret, I have been wondering all day if it would not be wise for you and Virginia to return with me."

"I hardly think Virginia would listen to such a suggestion," Mrs. Lee replied, looking hesitatingly at her daughter.

"Of course, if father insists and you wish to do so. I will not refuse to go, mother, but I do think we shall

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be throwing away all we have gained by the sacrifices and hardships of these two years," Virginia said earnestly.

"The chances are that everything will soon be in ruins here anyway, my dear," Mr. Lee said. "I think you will see this whole region a battle ground within three months."

"At any rate, why go to Richmond? Aunt Nita has repeatedly written for us to come there and why is it not better for us? The danger is even more imminent at Richmond than it is here, while if Bragg should be defeated here he will retreat toward Atlanta and, combined with Johnston, our forces can hold that city, at least."

"Let it be Atlanta if you prefer it. I thought of Richmond because I could be with you there, and Hugh, too, a part of the time, perhaps," Mr. Lee answered.

Virginia was trellising the new growth of a vine over a frame at the corner of the veranda. She worked away after her father ceased speaking, humming softly to herself, apparently intent upon what she was doing.

"It would be company for Juanita and Kittie for us to go there," said Mrs. Lee, half divining what Virginia herself scarcely realized, that Hugh's presence was no particular inducement to go to Richmond.

"I'll tell you, father, let us remain here a little longer. I will consult with General Bragg when you are gone and whenever I find he thinks we are in danger of being cut off from Atlanta, mother and I will go at once. In that way, we'll save the place if possible," Virginia suggested.

"It may be you are right," Mr. Lee admitted. "In any event, you have Hudson with you and he is thoroughly reliable."

"What danger do you apprehend for us here, father? Tell me what to expect, that I may be prepared for it."

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"You may expect the fields and garden to be despoiled of every thing eatable by man or beast," Mr. Lee began.

"Yes, I'd look for that," she answered.

"You may expect squads of soldiers at any time to require you to have meals prepared for them—from two or three of them to dozens, it may be," her father continued.

"Our own or Federal soldiers, do you mean?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"Either. It is the way with war, you know. Armies must be supported and it is usually at the expense of the people among whom they are encamped."

"What else?" asked Virginia.

"You may expect the house to be taken possession of by a band of officers," was the reply.

"It's a shame," cried Virginia indignantly. "What right would any crowd of men have to enter the home of defenseless women and drive them out?"

"They wouldn't drive you out, probably, and it might be you would be perfectly safe in your own apartments. Such a house would be seized by officers of good rank and, as a rule, they are men of honor," Mr. Lee answered.

"If it is permissible at all to enter a private house by force, I suppose we may expect it from a horde of Yankees," Virginia said hotly.

"Not only from Yankees, daughter," her father returned mildly. "Any soldiers would do the same. Indeed, it is only the friendly relation between us and Bragg that has spared us so long. It is remarkable that we have escaped the intrusion of our own forces."

"It wouldn't be quite so exasperating to say the least, if it were our own men," said Mrs. Lee.

"No, indeed," Virginia exclaimed. "We should then feel we were suffering in a good cause. And besides, we could trust to the honor of our own men, but Yankees!

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I'll have to be made all over to have confidence in them."

Mr. Lee laughed at what he called her fanaticism, adding a little proudly that that was the Old Dominion blood showing itself.

"You see, father," Virginia said, "returning to the question of remaining at home, if mother and I leave we'll lose our hold upon the blacks entirely and they will be scattered far and near, whereas, by staying here, I believe we can keep most of them, no matter what may happen. If the blacks stay with us, the armies may take the crops and what they will this year. Next spring after the worst is over here, as it will be, of course, we can go to work again the same as ever."

After this there was no more question of leaving, and Mrs. Lee and Virginia made such preparations as seemed advisable for a sudden invasion and usurpation of their home. Household treasures of silver and china and bric-a-brac were packed and sent to the lodge where Virginia had determined to find refuge in the event of the seizure of their home by Union soldiers.

Mr. Lee, who was a lover of books, had collected a fine library for the times and the locality in which he lived. These books, together with a store of rare pictures and other relics and art treasures that Mr. Chester had sent his step-son from Europe, Virginia stowed carefully away in the library and locked the door, herself carrying the key.

As for Mr. Lee, he too was busy during the remaining days of his visit, making disposition of horses, vehicles, stores and implements; instructing Hudson and the more intelligent negroes what to do in the event of disturbance from either of the contending armies; riding into the village or to the camp to consult with General Bragg.

Conflicting rumors were afloat as to the movements

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and strength of the Federal army. Everything betokened preparation for action of some sort but in the midst of it all the Confederate commander was not idle. Scouts were out in all directions to collect reports concerning the approaching army, officers were riding hither and thither, examining such places as seemed desirable for battle-fields, or roads which might serve as traps for an attack upon the invading throng. The General himself was sending urgent messages to Mississippi, to Alabama, to Virginia, for all the re-inforcements that could possibly be sent to him. Knoxville was in great danger and with its fall the army at Chattanooga was the sole reliance for the possession of Tennessee. Thus matters stood on the occasion of Mr. Lee's last visit to the camp and thus he informed his wife and daughter when he returned home to bid them good-bye before leaving for the east, adding that Bragg had promised to apprise them as regularly as possible of the situation. Mrs. Lee was greatly concerned for their safety and even Virginia's heart sank a little at the prospect before them, but she kept a brave face and a cheerful voice, assuring her father that he need have no uneasiness, that with Hudson so near at hand, they would be personally safe, and that was, after all, the essential thing. Mr. Lee bade them an affectionate farewell and hastened to catch the train for Atlanta, which route he considered it advisable to take rather than risk a hazardous journey through a part of the state that might even then be in the hands of the Federals.

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CHAPTER X.

WE have spoken elsewhere of the rapidity with which the people recovered from the effects of the Civil War. It is no less remarkable to note how speedily the old landmarks that once served as monuments of that disastrous period have disappeared. Especially is this true of those regions which formed the borderland between the slave and the free states, where the opposing armies surged back and forth with all-devastating might, and where the inhabitants of one house shrank in dismay from the approach of a band of troops in blue, while they of another household fled in terror from sight of the men in grey.

Fields that once were battle-grounds are now the seats of thriving towns and villages; towns and villages that once were the scenes of brief engagement or of long campaign, have years since replaced the old ruins, battered by shot and shell, with modern homes and handsome public buildings, and have spread themselves over the adjoining land until the veteran of the "sixty's" could not find to-day the spot where his brother fell by his side or where he himself left his strong right arm to moulder into dust.

We of the first generation after the war can well remember how there was something on every hand to remind us in bitterness that there had been a rebellion in the land. Here was the long sloping ridge on which the skirmish of '62 was fought; there was the fine old southern home on the outskirts of the town which served as a fort in the battle of '63, with here and there a bullet hole as token of that perilous day; over yonder in the cemetery lay the long, long grave with its white picket

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fence, that children circled about with bated breath, awe-struck, as it were, by the assurance of our elders that more than two hundred soldiers, unhonored and unknown, slept beneath the grassy mound.

Then, too—could it ever be forgotten—there was the white marble slab on the hillside, with its gruesome picture of a man blindfolded and kneeling beside an open coffin, bearing the awful inscription "Murdered, January 20th, 186--." This, by the horror it inspired, drew like lodestone upon the minds of youthful visitors among the tombs, and they went home with the gathering shades of evening to hear again the pitiful story, a household theme in the vicinity, of a young man who, having returned from the war for a Christmas visit to his friends, was called out from the midst of the family glee by stragglers from a hostile camp nearby, and ruthlessly shot because, forsooth, he persistently declared his ignorance of an army secret the ruffians wished to discover.

This is but an instance of tales galore which held their own in the interest excited in the child-mind of a quarter of a century ago with "Jack, the Giant Killer," "George and His Hatchet," and "David and Goliath." There are, doubtless, not a dozen children of the later generation who know of the uncanny tombstone and the battle-scarred house, while the stories of barbarous cruelties perpetrated by a perfidious soldiery have gone the way of the rattle-snake and panther and witch tales of our earlier ancestors in the western wilds. When Father Time has made a few more rounds with his fatal blade, we shall see no trace of the havoc wrought by the four years of civil strife.

The reader will pardon this diversion from the general thread of our narrative. It is difficult to write a story of the Civil War without falling occasionally into reminis-

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cences of "ye olden times," which come to us like stray leaves from an old, old chapter in our earlier lives.

We come now to a period when war settled like a pitiless scourge upon Chattanooga and the surrounding country, when the camp fires of a vast ephemeral city burned for miles and miles along the banks of the Tennessee river, on the slopes of the mountains, and in the valleys between, when the highways were lined with armies on the march and the byways were haunted by refugees or scoured by squads of soldiers deputed to collect supplies. For a time the hostile armies sat like two ferocious bulldogs, now eyeing each other and growling and showing their teeth, by way of intimidating the foe, now walking round and round each other in the hope of finding a vulnerable point; now threatening an attack, now feigning a retreat, each evincing a determination to hold the ground or die valiantly.

In the midst of this uncertainty and turmoil our friends at Lee's Summit pursued, as best they could, the "even tenor of their way." In the household, Mrs. Lee observed the same regularity and order to which she was accustomed in times of peace, while Hudson and Virginia exacted from the blacks the strictest performance of their daily tasks. Almost two weeks had elapsed after Mr. Lee's departure, varied by an occasional encouraging message from General Bragg, when, late one evening, the following note was delivered to Mrs. Lee:

"Dear Madam:

The move at which I hinted in my last communication to you has been fully determined upon and will be begun to-morrow. Three or four ladies are at present visiting their husbands in our camp, and will be with us on the journey. By making a forced march we can reach Lee's Summit before nightfall, and, as there is not time to get

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a reply from you, I am taking the liberty to say that we will make Lee's Summit our resting-place for the night.

Yours truly,
Bragg."

So far were they from feeling annoyed by the prospect, that Mrs. Lee and Virginia awaited the arrival of the expected party with pride and eagerness. Every available room was fitted up as a guest chamber, and a long dining-table extended the full length of the back porch. Its pillars, as well as those of the front veranda were twined with vines and flowers and the colors of the Confederacy, while from the highest pinnacle of the house the stars and bars floated on the breeze. This display seemed daring in the face of a hostile army only a few miles distant, but the attitude of the family was too thoroughly known for simulation to be of any avail, even had they been inclined to take advantage of so mean a subterfuge.

The bustle of preparation was still going on when there was a sound of music in the air, and Jake, the family sentinel, came tumbling headlong into the porch, breathless and staring, gasping out: ,

"Dey's comin' Dey's comin'."

"Who's coming, Jake, and where?" asked his mistress in surprise.

"De sojers. More'n a million of 'em, I spect. On de firs' hill an' on de tother'n," he yelled, and away he ran to mount his tree for further reconnoitering.

Mrs. Lee left her work and hastened to the front door to see for herself what had so excited the urchin. Here she was met by Virginia, who had heard the unwonted noises and come to investigate them.

"Mother," she said, as she approached, "we must put some restraint upon Jake. He is too boisterous and disrespectful. Such an uproar before strangers would be

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exceedingly embarrassing. Jake," as she saw that culprit returning from his self-appointed post, "if you don't behave better you shall not enter the front yard again for a month. One would think you were fresh from heathendom instead of having been born in a Christian land."

"Law, Miss, I begs yo' pahdon, but it's 'nough to upset Jerry hissef to see de likes o' dat on de hill yander!" and Jake jerked his head toward the approaching columns. By this time his mistress had discovered the fact that a large army was marching over the hill toward her home, and, turning toward Virginia, she said, in dismay:

"Are they our own men or the enemy?"

"Our own, I think. Yes, I am sure they are clad in gray. And see! they are halting."

In a moment more a horseman, whom they readily recognized as General Bragg, left the line of march and rode briskly toward the house. The ladies stood in the doorway until he turned in upon the lawn and then came out to the head of the front steps to await him.

"I realize, Mrs. Lee, how great is my presumption in thus intruding upon you," the General said, bowing very low over Mrs. Lee's hand, "and I can only plead for excuse my implicit confidence in your loyalty and your hospitality, two virtues which are equally laudable."

"I should consider myself unworthy the name of Lee did I not rejoice in such an opportunity to serve my country," Mrs. Lee returned, in her stateliest Virginia manner.

"That is nobly spoken, lady. It is a pleasure to find that the splendor of the illustrious name is in no way dimmed by its representatives in Tennessee," Bragg gallantly replied, adding, as he turned to salute Virginia, "and it is no less gratifying to know that the noblest qualities of the race are to be perpetuated for yet another generation."

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"You do me too much honor, General Bragg," Virginia replied, laughing. "I shall be doing violence to my nervous system next, trying to maintain myself in your estimation."

"It will not be necessary, I assure you. It is little short of impossible for my confidence in you to be shaken," the General took time to reply before he said, in his brisk, business-like way, "I rode on in advance of the line, ladies, to consult you as to the accommodation of the soldiers you see in the distance yonder. Will you permit them to encamp in the field and pasture at the foot of the hill there?"

"Is it a suitable place, do you think, Virginia?" asked Mrs. Lee, turning to her daughter.

"That is for General Bragg to say, mother," Virginia replied, adding, as she turned toward the General, "Everything on the plantation is at your disposal, you have but to make your own choice."

"You are very kind," Bragg returned, "and I think I will decide on this field, as it will be near at hand for our supervision."

Calling to Sam, who was always in evidence when a guest appeared, Virginia said, "Tell Hudson to have a way opened into the pasture in two or three places for the accommodation of the soldiers."

Sam started off on the run to deliver the message, and the General, remounting, beckoned to his officers on the distant hill. There was a momentary stir along the line, and then the strains of "Dixie" floated across the lowlands, accompanied by the drum beat and the tramp! tramp! tramp! of the on-coming army. Mrs. Lee and Virginia stood speechless, thrilled and enraptured with enthusiasm. Their visitor rode slowly down the shady drive, thoroughly enjoying the scene before him. And it

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was a truly beautiful picture. There was a grassy slope with the fine old mansion on its summit, the stately trees with wide-spreading branches, and, at a little distance, the negro quarters, where countless woolly heads peeped out from the doorways or around the corners at the strange spectacle, while here and there an intrepid youth sat perched on the top of his mammy's cabin. At the foot of this slope, with a breadth of several miles, lay the valley of the Tennessee River, whose waters rolled blue and placid in plain view from the hillside lawn. Far in the distance rose the wooded slopes and bare, rugged peaks of a mountain chain. The level drive wound gracefully around the boundary of the lawn, bearing to the right for a little way and then suddenly climbing the steep ascent of those hills where Jake was accustomed to discern the approach of friend or foe. The army marching on their slopes was on dress parade for the sake of the effect of their braveries on the observers along the way, for in war, as in other vocations of life, the favor of the crowd follows in the wake of good fortune and success. At the head of the column came the decorated carriages in which the ladies, handsomely dressed, rode in state, attended on either side by an escort of cavalry gaily caparisoned and glittering in gold and tinsel; officers were similarly arrayed, with epaulets and stars and insignia glistening in the sun, while even the common soldiers were imposing and attractive with their neat gray uniforms and gleaming bayonets.

On, on they came with banners waving, colors flying, bands playing, and an occasional company marching to the music of their own song. Virginia stood spellbound. "It is splendid!" she at length exclaimed in ecstasy. In the light of succeeding events, let us rather exclaim with Napoleon as he looked upon the valiant "Scotch

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Grays" before the battle of Waterloo, "It is a pity!" All this, and doubly, trebly, infinitely more than all this. And for what? A blasting institution, a mistaken principle, ruined homes, depleted fortunes, a fallen banner, a lost cause! Shall not the children of the victors stretch out the hand of love and compassion to the children of the vanquished and, together with them, be grateful to an over-ruling Providence who has ordered all things well!

The carriages moved on until they reached the entrance to the lawn where there was a pause for brief consultation, after which they wound slowly up the drive, the whole party stopping now and then to look at the long line of men marching, marching, marching over the hills and spreading themselves like a vast wave over the camping ground. One could almost imagine them an endless river, flowing, ever flowing, and mingling its waters with the sea. The individual became a part of the mass, *he* was no longer *he*, but a part of *it*.

The ladies waited, too, for General Bragg who was to present them to their hostess and who tarried to give instructions as to the arrangement of the camp. Presently he came cantering up the hill, overtaking the party just as they reached the house.

"Now, Mrs. Lee," the General said when all had been introduced, "these ladies have had a tiresome journey, some of them having come from distant camps to-day. No doubt a short time for rest and repairs of toilet would be a great luxury to them."

"We had anticipated as much," Mrs. Lee returned. "They will be shown to their rooms at once."

"I myself will go down to the camp and return at the supper hour with the remainder of our party. What is your pleasure as to the time?" he asked.

"An hour hence if that is convenient for you," the hostess replied.

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"Be it so," looking at his watch. "A good soldier is never late, you know, Madam," and, raising his hat, he hurried away, while Mrs. Lee turned to her guests whom Virginia was already conducting to their rooms. Before the hour had expired the ladies began to return to the parlor. Ere long the party was completed by the arrival of the gentlemen, showing evidences that even a camp has its facilities for toilet-making. A buzz of conversation filled the rooms until Webster looked in at the door and signified to his mistress that supper was waiting. It would have been most gratifying to Mr. Lee to look in upon the company assembled at his table that September evening. It was the very acme of his old-school ideas of jovial hospitality.

Enjoyment and mirth beamed from every countenance. It was the first camp visit for the ladies present and, notwithstanding the portentous threatenings of battle, the splendid display of the afternoon and the delightful surroundings of the hour had served to produce a truly happy and festive occasion. The guests were enthusiastic in their praise of Mrs. Lee and Virginia as hostesses, while good old Dinah from her post of observation inside the kitchen door fed her own vanity on the compliments paid to the cooking, her broad face beaming all over with a gratified smile when one of the gentlemen called for a third helping to the "finest turkey ever roasted," her fat sides shaking with laughter at the perpetration of some joke within range of her mental vision. As for Webster, the best trained butler on Fifth Avenue could not have conducted himself with more gravity, beckoning to Sallie or Elsie or Meg to carry this and bring that, and imagining himself, in the absence of his master, the sole supporter of the honor and dignity of the house.

Nor was it long before Mrs. Lee discovered that there

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were points of common interest between herself and several of her visitors.

"Has this always been your home, Mrs. Lee?" one general asked casually soon after they were seated at the table.

"Oh, no, indeed," was the quick rejoinder in a tone plainly indicating that Tennessee was all very well at present, but to have been born there, and at her age! It was not to be thought of! "I was born in Virginia," she added proudly.

"A most excellent nativity, Madam, a most excellent nativity," he replied. "What was your family name?"

"Graham," she answered. "My maiden name was Margaret Graham."

"Margaret Graham!" exclaimed a bright-eyed little woman at the farther end of the table. "Why, that was the name of my sister's dearest friend at school in Richmond."

"And who was your sister?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"Ellen Carter," was the reply.

"Is it possible? My old friend, Ellen Carter. I have not heard from her in years and I never knew what became of her. Where is she?" Mrs. Lee asked with the greatest interest.

"She married in the North and went to live in Cleveland, Ohio, and her husband is in the Union army."

"How unfortunate! That is one of the many distressing features of a civil war," said Virginia, who, in the midst of so much gaiety could not resist a feeling of sadness as she looked from one to another of these stalwart men and wondered if any shadow of possible calamity disturbed them.

"Yes," Mrs. Wallace returned, "I am in constant dread lest Ellen's husband and mine should be on opposite sides of the same battle one of these days."

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"I can easily appreciate your feeling," Mrs. Lee said, "I have always thought it much to be thankful for that we have no near relatives on the other side. As the sister of Ellen Carter, Mrs. Wallace, you are doubly welcome to my home, and I shall have many questions to ask concerning her before you leave."

"Thank you. Ellen will be delighted to hear that I have found you and that you remember her so kindly," the guest replied.

Another conversation led accidentally to the fact that one of the gentlemen knew the Chesters well, had often had business relations with Mr. Chester and had even met him with Johnston's army the year before.

Supper was almost over when Virginia, in a quiet moment, said inquiringly:

"I am curious to know, General Bragg, what this move betokens. I cannot understand why you should be marching away from the village. Is it an army secret that must not be divulged?"

"It is an army secret, yes, but one of the open sort which admits of discussion among people known to be loyal," Bragg replied with a significant glance at Webster who was, at the moment, the only servant near. Mrs. Lee motioned Webster to her side and whispered an errand which he immediately went to execute.

"Webster is thoroughly trustworthy, I am confident, but of course you do not wish to take any risks," she said.

"The wife and daughter of Thomas Lee are always to be trusted," the commander began, "and that you may not be alarmed by the movements of our own men, I will tell you that we have determined to evacuate the village."

"Evacuate! Evacuate the village!" Mrs. Lee and

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Virginia exclaimed together. "Then shall we not leave here at once, Virginia?" Mrs. Lee asked in alarm.

Virginia looked at the General who continued:

"No, there is no cause for alarm. I do this because I do not wish to be surrounded in the town and shut off from supplies and thrown into a state of siege as our forces were at Vicksburg. The example is too recent and too disastrous to be followed."

"But isn't the possession of Chattanooga the object of contention?" the hostess asked doubtfully.

"The peaceable possession of it, yes," was the reply. "*That*, we do not propose the Yankees shall have. We shall withdraw our army southward with the appearance of a retreat. Word will be sent out by pretended deserters that we are retreating into Georgia. In reality we shall seize the best positions for battle-grounds and prevent the enemy, if possible, from entering the town. Or, in case they do enter it, we shall be on the heights beyond and in a position to make the place exceedingly dangerous and uncomfortable if not absolutely untenable. You may be sure we shall not give up the town and leave it to the enemy without one of the most desperate struggles of the whole war."

"And it is to this end that you are on the march now?" asked Virginia.

"Exactly," was the emphatic response. "We have not yet definitely located our headquarters but we shall not be farther away than La Fayette."

"But even that is several miles from us," said Virginia, evidently disturbed by the tidings.

"A messenger can easily ride the distance in a few hours," he replied, "and unless I am myself very greatly deceived and surprised you may be sure I shall not fail to warn you if there is need of your going to Atlanta."

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I promised your father to do so, and I shall try to keep faith with him."

"Well, you'll find me reasonably brave so long as we can have an encouraging message from you occasionally," said Virginia.

"If it were not for Virginia's determination my courage would all have oozed out long ago," Mrs. Lee declared as she arose from the table and conducted the guests to the veranda where Webster had placed chairs for them and where they could enjoy a fine view of the camp with its blazing fires.

The gentlemen tarried for a few minutes and then went to the camp to see that all things were made safe for the night.

"How have you succeeded, Mrs. Lee, in keeping your plantation in such excellent order while ruin prevails elsewhere about you?" Mrs. S—— asked curiously when the gentlemen were gone.

"O, that is chiefly Virginia's skillful management," Mrs. Lee answered laughingly.

"I have heard that she is a perfectly wonderful girl. General Bragg says she is splendid," said another lady admiringly.

"O, but that is giving me credit I do not deserve, mother," Virginia hastened to say. "The whole thing, almost, is due to the fact that father was a judicious slave buyer and a considerate master."

"Many southerners have been that without such reward as we see here," said one woman doubtfully.

"Not to the extent my father was," Virginia replied. "Our slaves are of the very best character and they venerate my father above freedom itself."

"But he is away constantly," another interposed.

"We follow his course and his instructions implicitly when he is away," Virginia replied, "and we are fortunate

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in having an overseer who has made my father's principles and temper his own in controlling a band of slaves."

"Why have you escaped the depredations of soldiers, that have fallen so heavily upon so many people?" asked the wife of an officer recently transferred from Kentucky.

"There is no mystery even about that," Virginia replied. "You see, we have hitherto had no union soldiers in our immediate vicinity and by good fortune General Bragg is a personal friend of father's and has always had a special admiration for Lee's Summit. His protection, I think, has saved us from the ills that have come upon many of our neighbors."

"After this delightful visit you will enjoy the protection of more than one Confederate officer," said Mrs. S——.

"Thank you, I hope we may deserve it." Virginia answered.

"Speaking of changes the war has made," said the Kentucky lady, "you who live down here have no idea what utter desolation there is where I came from. We have had raids from the north and raids from the south and robbery and plundering from unprincipled men who care nothing for either north or south but despoil their neighbors for their own gain until scarcely a vestige remains of the prosperity that was ours before the war began. Why, buildings and growing crops—alas! there are no growing crops—but houses and barns and negro cabins are often burned in sheer wantonness because they cannot be taken away and the desperadoes are not willing to leave them for their rightful owners. And on the plantations, they dread most of all their freed blacks that know the plan and arrangement of the places where they have been slaves and, having no compunction of con-

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science, feel themselves justified in stealing or destroying the property of their former masters."

"Then they have not been properly treated as slaves," Virginia said almost indignantly.

"O, they are treated as well as they deserve, generally," was the reply. "They are a lazy, ungrateful, unruly set."

"I know they often seem so," Virginia said, "but our experience has been quite the contrary and I sometimes think masters are at fault for part of the misdemeanors of their slaves. I am sure that not one of our slaves, even those who have left the place, would ever turn his hand against my father or any member of his family."

"With such masters they are better off than if they were free," said Mrs. S——. "They are an improvident race, to say the least."

"Yes, I think myself they are that," Virginia returned, "but I do think they are susceptible to kind treatment."

From this they drifted into tales and incidents of the war. One lady, a Mrs. Price, had had a brother in Vicksburg during the siege and she depicted vividly some of the distressing scenes he had witnessed there.

"No doubt General Bragg has acted wisely not to allow himself to be cooped up in the village here," she said at last.

"I was greatly concerned when he first spoke of evacuating the village," Virginia replied, "but I have great confidence in his judgment and can easily reconcile myself to the move."

"I heard him say yesterday that there is only one man in the Federal army he fears and that is General Grant," said Mrs. S——.

"And it is thought in Vicksburg, my brother says,

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that he will be here within thirty days," Mrs. Price volunteered.

"We have seen the pomp and pageantry of war to-day, to-night we see it in its social phase; who can tell how long it will be before we are in the midst of its grim realities," Virginia said musingly.

"Don't speak of it, Miss Lee," said Mrs. Wallace. She was a timid, shrinking little lady whose husband, it was said, was always in the thickest of the fight. "It simply frightens me to death to think of it."

Then turning to Mrs. Lee she recalled some amusing incident she had heard her sister tell about school life in Richmond, after which all the ladies fell easily and naturally to relating interesting bits of experience from their own youth.

So absorbed had they all become that they could scarcely realize more than two hours had passed when the gentlemen returned and informed them that it was ten o'clock and time good soldiers with a hard day before them were in bed.

It was not until long after the good-nights had been said and silence reigned throughout the house that Virginia retired to the little back room where she and her mother had chosen to sleep in order that their own rooms, which were commodious and comfortable, might be occupied by guests. The scene in the valley had a fascination she could not resist and she sat on the veranda until a late hour and until the air of the cool September night grew damp and chilly, watching the fires as they died away or blazed afresh with a new supply of fuel, and musing upon the succession of events that had brought them to their present situation.

When at last she sought her room, she undressed and slipped noiselessly into bed lest she should awaken her mother who was sleeping soundly after the busy, excit-

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ing day. Not so with Virginia. She was not nervous, she even felt unusually calm and passive, but she could not sleep. It was an effort almost painful for her to close her eyes and hour after hour, as it seemed to her, she lay staring out of the window at the stars above her. How she regretted that she was shut off from view of the camp. It would be no hardship to lie awake all night if only she might be watching the fires and the men sitting around them, stretched out on their blankets, or walking up and down, up and down, as some of them were doing constantly. How long she lay thus she did not know, but finally without a sense of weariness or sleepiness, she fell into a fitful slumber from which she was suddenly aroused by the sound of the bugle calling to arms. While she was yet more than half asleep, she sprang up in bed, bewildered and at a loss to realize her surroundings.

"What is it! What is it!" she exclaimed. And then recalling that her mother slept by her side, she laid her hand gently on her shoulder and said: "Mother, mother, listen! What does the signal mean and what is the bright light on the hill yonder?"

When Mrs. Lee was thoroughly aroused she said: "It is the bugle call. There must be something wrong."

Before she had finished the sentence Virginia was at the window. "See! See!" she exclaimed. "There are fires everywhere. I can count six of them on the hill-tops all along the horizon," and instantly there came to her mind a recollection of those fires that warned the men of Old England of the approach of the dreaded Vikings and called them to arms for defense. Throwing loose robes over their night-dresses, she and her mother rushed out into the large hall and, listening, heard voices in hurried conversation for a moment and then doors flew open everywhere and men hurried past them crying

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out: "It is the danger signal." "Don't be alarmed." "We are prepared." "There is no danger for you." "Dress yourselves and stay where you are."

A quarter of an hour went by before a messenger relieved the suspense by telling them that the enemy had been seen in large numbers in the valley, apparently coming their way, but it was hoped the signal fires, indicating that they had been discovered, would deter them from a nearer approach.

Another quarter of an hour passed and some of the gentlemen returning announced that word had come from the sentries on the hilltops that the enemy were turning into another road leading toward the village.

"It seems that for the present we shall not be molested," said General Bragg, "but they have succeeded in spoiling our morning nap. See it is growing light in the east."

"I neglected to ask last night how early you would have your breakfast, General," said Mrs. Lee apologetically.

"Now that we are up, we may as well have it as early as it is convenient for you, Mrs. Lee. We shall have the more time for our journey and for getting settled in our new quarters," was the reply.

All was bustle and excitement in house and camp until breakfast was over and ladies, officers and men were ready to depart. General Bragg had required from his subordinates an exact account of the supplies taken from the fields and granaries. In bidding Mrs. Lee good-bye, he showed her the account, asking her to make an estimate of what she considered fair compensation for the entertainment of the officers and ladies in her home.

"Do not think so meanly of me as to suppose I could make a charge for hospitality that would be not only a

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pleasure but an honor to any southern home," Mrs. Lee replied proudly.

"It is most generous and kind of you to say so, my dear madam," General Bragg returned. "Let it be as you desire as it respects the entertainment of the guests in the house, and I assure you this visit will be long remembered by us all as one of the bright recollections of our days in Tennessee. As for the supplies for troops, however, they must be paid for in full. It is your right and you must receive it. A few invasions like this would rob Lee's Summit of its proud pre-eminence as a thrifty, orderly plantation."

"Virginia, dare we receive pay for these things? What would your father say?" Mrs. Lee said hesitatingly.

"The question is not open to either you or your father, Miss Lee," the General said as he handed her the account. "I refer you to your overseer concerning the accuracy of this statement. He has been present and, at my request, gave his personal attention to all supplies taken away."

"It is unnecessary, sir," Virginia replied. "Your word as a gentleman and a Confederate officer does not need corroboration."

A satisfactory settlement was speedily made and, with a hurried good-bye, Bragg followed the carriages which had already taken their place at the head of the line of march.

Virginia stood watching the soldiers until the last company disappeared, then turned without a word to enter the house.

"We shall feel lonely and unprotected for a day or two after all this," her mother said.

"We *are* lonely and unprotected," was the disconsolate response.

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CHAPTER XI.

SEVERAL days passed after the visit of the officers and troops, dull and uneventful save for a single message from General Bragg saying there had been no definite change in the situation of the armies. Frequently Hudson or the blacks brought in reports of marching troops seen on distant highways from fields where they were at work, but only occasionally had small forces gone directly past Lee's Summit. Fortunately up to this time, the camps were all too far away for any of those petty annoyances and heavy requisitions of supplies from which many farms and plantations had suffered. Twice had small companies asked for grain or other necessities for the day's demands, but the amounts were inconsiderable and had been furnished uncomplainingly. Now and then, too, short skirmishes were heard when hostile bands met on the march, but such encounters were usually bluster without visible results.

These demonstrations became more frequent, more furious and more prolonged as the month of September advanced until they culminated in those two awful days which paralyzed every peaceful effort within a circuit of a hundred miles and more, when awe and anxious expectation sat upon every countenance within hearing of the canon's roar and on beyond where tidings flew like wildfire that "battle was on" near the Chickamauga. Little Chickamauga! a name heretofore unknown beyond the confines of the land through which it flowed, henceforth made famous and historic by the scenes enacted on those two terrible days.

The memorable 19th of September was Sunday, and Mrs. Lee and Virginia went into the village in the morn-

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ing to attend church. All other expeditions away from home they had given up, but this custom they had determined to adhere to so long as roads were open and safe for ordinary travel. All morning they had noticed skirmishing and indications of unusual turmoil in the direction where the main body of Confederate troops was known to be encamped. As the services at the church proceeded these threatenings became more frequent and alarming. Mr. Halliburton read an appropriate morning lesson and prayed more earnestly than he had ever been heard to pray before. He began his sermon in a subdued tone, pausing occasionally as the noise of battle waxed louder, until all at once there arose such booming of cannon and roaring of artillery that anxiety, consternation, awe, settled upon both pastor and congregation. For perhaps the only time in his life Mr. Halliburton was sublime. A moment he stood transfixed, gazing over his trembling flock, then fell upon his knees and bowed his head. Unquestioningly his listeners with one accord followed his example and thus remained while the awful tumult lasted, the very earth trembling and shaking beneath them. At length there came a lull and as the distant sounds grew fainter and less frequent, the kneeling pastor raised his voice in earnest prayer to the God of battles, beseeching rather for *peace* than for the supremacy of the southern cause, as was his habit. In such an hour the noblest impulses of the human heart are uppermost and the meanest spirit takes on that bond of human sympathy which makes "all the world akin."

Quietly the little band of worshippers were dismissed and quietly they took their journey homeward. When Mrs. Lee and Virginia reached Lee's Summit, dinner was ready and waiting, Webster said. They looked a

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moment into each other's faces and Virginia slowly shook her head.

"Tell Dinah, Webster, she can take the dinner to her cabin for Jake and the other children. It will not be wanted here to-day," said Mrs. Lee.

All through the afternoon the two women, with blanched faces, sat on the veranda or on the lawn, speaking in subdued tones or listening in silent horror to the terrible battle going on. With evening came quiet and repose. Gradually the household fell into its accustomed ways. Mrs. Lee and Virginia ate their suppers and then sat, as usual, on the veranda, talking of the events of the day and wondering as to the results. Jake and his companions turned somersaults or played at leap-frog not far away while now and then an older black stopped to exchange a word with "de missus an' Miss Ginnie."

"My eye!" said Jake to Isaiah with a wink, "but don' you wish dere'd be battles ev'ry day," and he smacked his lips and "licked his chops" in recollection of the day's feast.

"Not me!" Isaiah answered scornfully. "Missus git so us' to it she'd nevah give us 'er dinner den."

"Now der might be sumfin in dat, Isaiah," Jake returned meditatively. "I's mighty fraid, do, we nevah tas' ano'er dinner like dat."

"You Jake! You Isaiah! Come heah!" called Dinah. "Don' you know better'n to go botherin' roun' when de missuses is a feelin' troubled? Come heah an' git in yo' wood and kinlins. Don' ye see de cloud in de wes'? Be havin' to make my fiah out'n wet wood nex'," she grumbled as the boys went scampering out to the wood pile.

It is not necessary to enter into the details of this battle. Every one has read how yet another day of this

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disastrous, indecisive struggle left the Union army in questionable possession of the village, the ultimate point of contest between the two armies, and left the Confederate army, worsted in the fight, in unsatisfactory possession of the field, ready to harass and annoy their adversary and to reduce them to a state of siege unless reinforcements were speedily received.

Thus once more the waiting time began for Mrs. Lee and Virginia as well as for the armies in their camps. No message came to them from General Bragg but from flying rumors they gathered there was nothing of importance to be told. After nearly a week of suspense, Virginia sent Sam into the village to learn what news he could from the Taylors or other friends, and to see if there were not letters from her father and Hugh. He returned while his mistresses were at dinner and handed the letters to Webster at the door. One was from Nell Taylor, giving them no special information but expressing the writer's sympathy with them in their lonely, isolated condition and assuring them of a welcome whenever they chose to come into the village to her home.

For Virginia there was a letter from Hugh which she read aloud to her mother.

"My Dear Virginia:

Of course you have expected something more from me than the brief scrawl I sent you on my arrival here but there has been so much to do—and yet so little that you would be interested in—that I have postponed writing, waiting for leisure and material for a letter that you would care to read. Even now I fear there is not much to tell.

I told you in my note how narrowly I escaped the Yankees at Knoxville. The journey from there on was beset with vexations and delays. At one miserable little out-of-the-way place among the mountains I waited three

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days and had to make a drive of more than sixty miles over the worst roads on earth in order to reach civilization and continue on my journey. I can tell you my stock of patriotism was below par about that time. It was only the thought of you that prevented me from turning back. I was a few days late but the unavoidable delay on the road was accepted as sufficient excuse, especially as there was nothing to do if I had been here. There is still nothing to do. We are all standing as it were, with our faces toward Chattanooga—indeed, I am always standing so, you know, Virginia—waiting to see what will happen there.

On the contrary, it is exceedingly gay in the city. We go down there frequently for a change, and it is a pleasant one, I assure you. I have seen your father there two or three times. How I wish you and your mother had come back with him. I often think when I see a party of handsome girls how you would shine among them. Your personal appearance and your quick intelligence would make you a leader there. Intelligence among women is in great demand these days.

And another thing, too, Virginia—you would be quite the fashion with your self-denial and your small economies. It is pre-eminently the proper thing to appear at social functions in a plain muslin gown or draperies made of fine old lace curtains ferreted out from one of grandmother's chests in the attic. A girl in jewels and new silks would be insufferable to the belles and beaux of Richmond now. This change has come on very suddenly here. Many people regard it as an indication that we are growing more determined than ever to win in this strife. I myself do not believe it is an indication of anything. It is a mere fashion, a fleeting rage which has happened to catch the fancy of these proud beauties.

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Or, if it means anything, it means that we are nearing the end of our resources.

Sept. 24th.—I have been down to Richmond since writing the above. We hear wild reports of battle on the Chickamauga. They say it was a sweeping victory for the Confeds and that the Yanks showed the white feather disgracefully. Write me the particulars. I can't believe the Yankees *ran* as they say they did in many parts of the field.

Pardon the delay in sending this letter. I didn't have time to finish it the other day. Believe me always, yours faithfully,

Hugh.

"How like Hugh that all sounds," said Mrs. Lee as Virginia finished reading, "and a very good letter, too, it seems to me."

"Do you think so, mother? I suppose I am by nature perverse and hard to please. It doesn't strike me as a good letter. Hugh is so indifferent and—and—superficial. Yes, that's the word I want. Now father's letter will have a different ring. You have a letter there from father, haven't you? Read it, mother. Things always look a little brighter for a while after father's letters come."

Mrs. Lee read aloud:

"My dear wife:

Your welfare at home is my constant anxiety now. Even when I left you in comparative safety, I always paid for the pleasure of a visit at home by a period of unusual dissatisfaction and—well, I'd call it homesickness if I were a boy. Now that you are surrounded by dangers on every hand, I cannot keep you out of my mind and I regret continually that I did not persuade Virginia to give up everything there and go to Atlanta where there is no immediate cause for alarm, to say the least. I say 'immediate' because, while I do not

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wish to talk discouragingly to you, yet I fear it is only a question of time until the Union army will close in upon Alanta as they are now surrounding Chattanooga. We hear extravagant reports of the great battle on Chickamauga creek, but their very extravagance excites my suspicion. We have too great a tendency to magnify our victories and to decry and underestimate the valor of our opponents. The fact is, the North and the South are too closely allied for either to be greatly inferior to the other. The same good Anglo-Saxon blood is in all our veins and it seems to me simply a question as to which can hold out the longer. In moments of enthusiasm or resentment I am inclined to feel that we must never give up, but my cooler judgment tells me, as it always has, that we were not prepared to enter upon this contest when we did and that sooner or later we shall be compelled to submit to the inevitable.

But enough of this. It will not please Virginia but she will allow her father to speak freely to his own, I am sure.

The conflict is far from ended in east Tennessee and there is dissension in our own ranks. As you know, Longstreet was sent to Bragg's assistance. Since Chickamauga they have had serious disagreements, at first with reference to plans for the movements of the army, but ending in personal ill-feeling which bodes no good for the cause. President Davis has determined to make a trip over to Chattanooga to try to effect a reconciliation or, failing in that, to devise some plan of compromise. He will start to-day and will be at Bragg's headquarters about two days the first of next week. I write you of his coming for this reason—I left a package of papers at home that I find I need very much. They are largely personal documents, but two of them are state papers for which I thought I should have no further use. They are of

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great importance to me just now. They are in a large yellow envelope marked 'Personal,' in the strong box that we put in the great chest at the Lodge. I wish Virginia would go down and get them and *see to it* that they are sent by a safe messenger to Mr. Davis's own hand if possible, but, in any event, have them left with Bragg to be given to Davis. This is most important. Do not neglect it.

Only my high opinion of my wife and daughter makes the thought of your present situation endurable, but of this I am convinced, that the bearing of a well-bred lady is a surer safeguard than locks and bolts would be to a woman of coarser mould.

Affectionately,

Thomas Lee."

For a time after the reading ceased Virginia continued to sit silent and thoughtful, her elbow resting on the table, her head leaning upon her hand.

"Well?" Mrs. Lee at length said questioningly.

"Well?" Virginia returned in the same tone, raising her head and looking across the table at her mother.

"Is it a better letter than Hugh's?" the latter asked.

"O, I had forgotten all about that," Virginia replied indifferently. "Why, yes, it is a better letter than Hugh's. It is not a frivolous letter, it is thoughtful and earnest."

"Thomas is much older than Hugh, remember," Mrs. Lee suggested.

"Yes, I know I am inclined to be a little over-critical with reference to Hugh," Virginia replied the least bit impatiently, "but Hugh will never write like father at any age. It isn't his style. However, it doesn't matter. Hugh has other good qualities. He has rather an amiable disposition in a careless, easy way."

All the while Virginia spoke there was that far-away

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look in her face that showed how little she really thought of the words she was saying.

"Were you thinking of what your father said about the war?"

"Yes," she answered sadly, adding quickly, "father is a man of good judgment and this has been his real opinion from the first. Possibly he is right but it will be a bitter disappointment to me. I believed in the cause of secession with all my heart and I reasoned that right and justice were sure to prevail in the end."

"What shall we do about these papers?" asked Mrs. Lee, always sufficiently executive not to allow the practical to be overshadowed by sentiment or theory.

"Yes, we must not forget about the papers. That is the most important part of the letter. I will go down at once and look after them."

"How shall we send them to the camp? Can Hudson take them?"

"I suppose so," Virginia replied, her mind still occupied with her own thoughts, and, rising from the table, she went immediately to the Lodge.

Mrs. Lee went into the sitting room and picked up a piece of embroidery she was copying from a pattern made in her girlhood for that trousseau which was being prepared when the reader was first introduced to her in the Old Dominion. Her work carried her mind back to the old happy days when she had made the original and suggested a comparison of her own betrothal with Virginia's—a theme which was often uppermost in her thoughts. So absorbed did she become, that she scarcely realized how the time passed until she heard the clock in the hall strike three. For the first time during the afternoon, she remembered Virginia's errand to the Lodge and wondered what could be detaining her so long away. She laid aside her embroidery and was in the

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act of summoning a servant to go in quest of her daughter when she became aware of an unusual commotion on the lawn, heard a loud knocking at the front door, and saw Sallie go through the hall to answer. With a premonition of something wrong, she paused on the threshold of the sitting room where she could overhear what was said between the visitor and the girl without herself being seen.

"Is your master at home, girl?" was asked in a man's voice.

"No, suh," Sallie replied.

"Where is he?"

"Ober in Richmond, suh."

"Is your mistress within?"

"Yes, suh."

"Tell her a visitor wishes to speak with her."

"Yes, suh," and Sallie turned slowly to execute the command. Seeing her mistress at the sitting room door she said: "A gemman wishes to speak to missus at de funt do'."

Mrs. Lee recoiled a little as she came within sight of a number of Union officers on horseback not twenty yards from the veranda steps.

"Good afternoon, madam," the stranger said as she came nearer the door.

"Good afternoon," Mrs. Lee responded with as little hesitation as possible, although her pale face indicated the tumult that was going on in her breast. In her husband's absence she had been used to leaning upon Virginia whose stronger nature was better able than hers to meet unpleasant situations. She had never even pictured to herself the possibility of having to meet the Federal soldiers all alone.

"Whose place is this?" the man asked in a brusque, business-like way.

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"Thomas Lee's."

"Rebel or Federal?"

"My husband is a member of the Confederate Government at Richmond," Mrs. Lee replied with a suggestion of defiance in her tone.

"A rebel of the worst type," the man replied. "I wonder you are not afraid to admit it with such a band of men as that at your door," nodding over his shoulder at his companions.

"It could do no good to dissemble. You could hear the same from anyone you might ask in the neighborhood," Mrs. Lee replied with a well-bred dignity which won upon the esteem of the visitor.

"And you are Mrs. Lee?" he asked, his tone modulating somewhat with the change of heart he was undergoing. He was finding the task before him not quite so easy as he had anticipated.

"I am."

"Related to the—rebel commander?" He paused an instant before repeating the offensive word, but even the new light in which he was beginning to see things did not fully reconcile him to the use of a milder term.

"Distantly related to him, yes, sir."

"Well, Mrs. Lee, I am sorry to intrude, but you know war is no respecter of persons. It lays its hand heavily upon all who chance to come in its path. You have a fine place here."

"It is a very pleasant home," Mrs. Lee said, seeing that some response was expected.

"How many rooms have you?"

"Sixteen."

"Ah!" he said, pausing as if to consider. "Sixteen rooms and two persons in family, amply sufficient for the accommodation of a dozen soldiers in addition to yourselves."

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Mrs. Lee did not reply. She had no inclination to smooth the way for the intruder.

"As I said before, I am sorry to seem disagreeable, madam," he continued hesitatingly, "but we are compelled to ask you to permit us to take possession of your house for a time as quarters for this band of officers with me. I hope you will be able to view the matter in its true light. I assure you the officers you see here are gentlemen from whom you have nothing to fear. Allow us to stay in the house and provide suitable food for us and you shall be treated with the utmost courtesy, I give you my word as a gentleman and an officer in the Union army."

"I presume you expect to compensate me for such entertainment?" Mrs. Lee asked.

"Why, no, I cannot say that we do, Mrs. Lee," the man replied with a twinkle of pleasure in his eye. "We were relying upon your far-famed hospitality for a welcome."

A look of pain passed over Mrs. Lee's countenance.

"The hospitality of the South is no idle tale," she said impressively. "Any one in east Tennessee will tell you that had you appeared in any other garb the door of Lee's Summit would stand wide open to you, be you friend or stranger. Only the hand that seeks to crush us fails to receive a friendly grasp."

"You make my duty a hard one, madam," the man replied, "and I beg you to understand that in making this demand we are but following the example of our armies and even your own all over the land."

"Spare yourself the trouble of apologizing," said Mrs. Lee, "we were warned long since that such a fate would come to us."

"Will you dispose of us in the house or do you prefer we should select quarters to suit ourselves," the man inquired, narrowing the discussion to the present situation.

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Mrs. Lee could restrain her agitation no longer and, bursting into tears, she said, helplessly, "I shall go to my room and you can take possession in your own way."

"Can you make provision for furnishing us with food?" the officer asked with some deference.

"I will tell Dinah, the cook, to prepare your meals," Mrs. Lee replied.

"Very well, you and your daughter will be absolutely unmolested in your rooms," the man said, and then, turning to his companions, he gave them the signal to alight, calling to Sam and other negroes standing by to care for the horses.

Mrs. Lee went to the kitchen, where she found the negroes in the highest excitement and indignation over the tidings which Sallie had carried to them of the arrival of the Yankees. Dinah's wrath was especially great, and she received Mrs. Lee's instructions with the direst threats of vengeance upon the digestions of the unsuspecting invaders.

"Yes, she'd git 'em sumfin to eat!" she scornfully declared, "sumfin good an' peppery 'at 'd make 'em see stars all day. If that didn' settle 'em she'd season der soup wid some o' dat croupy medicine what Missus lef' down to her cabin fo' Jake an' de chillun to take o' nights. She'd put a spidah in der cups—she'd—"

But here, Sallie, whom Mrs. Lee had sent to the Lodge to inquire about Virginia, returned, saying that Virginia had gone with Hudson to arrange for the storing of the crop from a certain field, and that Mrs. Hudson said they would surely be back soon.

Mrs. Lee impressed it upon the negroes to do whatever was demanded of them, reminding them that insolence or opposition could avail nothing either for themselves or for her, and then, bidding them spare her the humiliation of again appearing below stairs, she went to her room. As

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she passed through the halls, she saw the parlors and other apartments being inspected by the soldiers. It was more than woman nature could endure, and, falling into a fresh fit of weeping, she hastened upstairs, locking her door behind her. She determined to remain there until Virginia's arrival, when she would go to the Lodge or do whatever her daughter might think best.

The disappearance of the mistress removed all restraint and the men roamed at will over the house, taking an inventory of its comforts and comparing the desirability of the various sleeping rooms. The leader, who was addressed as Colonel Allerton by his companions, took, ex-officio, the first choice, selecting, of course, the front guest chamber overlooking the river view. Other officers divided the remaining bedrooms among them, numerous hot contentions arising as to which should have the right of choice. The Colonel was frequently called on to settle these disputes. At one time he observed a group of men talking loudly and making themselves at home among the toilet articles on the bureau of a daintily furnished room. He stepped to the door to discover the cause of the disturbance.

"By George! I guess it's about my time to choose," a coarse man by the name of Captain Painter was saying, "and I rather think I'll get about the best room of the lot. There's everything here that heart could wish for," he continued, perfuming himself from the contents of a cut-glass bottle. "Patterson, will you go partners with me here?"

"This is evidently the young lady's room and not at our disposal, Captain," said Colonel Allerton in remonstrance.

"The deuce it ain't," was the retort. "What do I care for the young lady? I mean to establish myself right here in the midst of all this finery."

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"You can't do it, Painter, I promised on my honor that the apartments of the ladies should be reserved strictly for their own use," the Colonel urged.

"The devil you did," Painter exclaimed angrily. "People who want their rights respected must not turn rebel," and he threw himself recklessly into a frail settee which creaked beneath his weight.

"Rebel or no rebel, not one article in this room shall be molested," said Colonel Allerton, drawing a revolver from his pocket with a menacing gesture. "Out of here, the last one of you. There's plenty of room here without intrusion upon the ladies."

Painter beat a hasty retreat but he bore with him a grudge which promised many a petty annoyance for the superior officer.

In the kitchen the Colonel so ingratiated himself with the negroes by small tips and coaxing phrases that they were measurably won from their preconceived prejudices. Dinah's wrathful countenance gave place to her usual benign expression and she strongly advised grave consideration of their conduct, cautioning Sallie and Meg not to be too hasty in their tempers and "'lowing missus probably knowed bettah than she did, aftah all, what wus becomin' under such succumstances." A generous supply of good things for the table was thus easily insured.

In the meantime others of the party had explored the cellar, demonstrating their satisfaction as they ascended the steps by divers pantomime performances.

"Is it all right, Carson?" the Colonel asked with a meaning smile.

"I should say!" Major Carson replied. "Enough to outlast Bragg many a day."

"Good!" said the Colonel, the smile developing into a broad grin while he rubbed his hands together as if in

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self congratulation. "We've struck it rich here. It's the best I've seen south of the Ohio River."

"And, by Jove! but won't the boys from down the road open their eyes when they come to spend an evening with us in the great parlors there! Campaigning on this scale is not so bad after all." As he spoke, Carson walked up to a closed door and tried the lock.

"Fast!" he exclaimed, surveying the door all over critically. "What does it mean, do you suppose, Colonel? There must be something in here worth finding."

"Don't know, I'm sure. We'll ask the ladies to explain," the Colonel replied carelessly, adding as an afterthought, "We're short a bedroom or two unless Mrs. Lee and her daughter decide to withdraw from the house and this may fit us out exactly."

"The ladies be d——," scoffed Painter who arrived upon the scene just in time to get an inkling of the situation. "Break her open, Carson!" and with a bound he threw himself against the door of the library where Virginia had collected their treasures for safe keeping. The lock snapped, the door flew open, and only the long library table against which Painter landed kept him from sprawling on the floor. Under cover of the hilarity that followed, a number of men rushed into the room and began overhauling books, pictures and bric-a-brac. It was like the opening of a treasure house and the intruders gloated over the choice prizes they hoped to confiscate. Colonel Allerton's revolver was again in evidence.

"Not so, my men" he shouted above the din. "This robbery and plundering is a species of vandalism that cannot go on under my command. We are here to be lodged and fed, not to devastate the premises and, Painter, I'll report you for insubordination if I have many more of your rows to settle to-day." Taking his station inside

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the door, the Colonel waited until the men had satisfied their curiosity and sought new fields of amusement and then, carefully shutting the door, he made it fast and issued orders that it should not be opened again. He had enough innate refinement to appreciate the home into which he had come and he would not see it ruthlessly despoiled.

The soldiers had been in possession of the house for more than an hour when Virginia returned and they were taking their ease on the veranda or in the parlors, smoking, talking, playing chess or cards. Recalling her father's warning, she comprehended the situation at once and, summoning all the dignity and fortitude she could command, she walked bravely up the steps.

"What does this mean?" she demanded of the gentlemen on the veranda who were busily engaged and had not observed her coming.

"Ho! This must be the young lady!" Painter exclaimed loudly enough to be distinctly heard, while Colonel Allerton, rising, came toward Virginia with a respectful bow.

"It means, Miss," he said, ignoring Painter, "that, according to the usages of war, this house has been taken as quarters for officers during the sojourn of the Federal Army in this vicinity."

"Such usage is rather hard upon the citizens, sir," the young lady replied coldly.

"Unfortunately that is true, Miss——Lee, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," Virginia said proudly.

"But we have for precedent the custom of the noblest armies in history and for authority, the Federal government at Washington," Colonel Allerton argued.

"And this is the treatment we receive from the government we are asked to respect and uphold!" she said

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in a bitter tone. The best of us are often unreasonable under extreme provocation.

"This is the treatment that government permits its defenders to mete out to those who take part in a rebellion against its authority," the Colonel replied firmly, although his tone and manner were kindly and deferential.

"Be darned if I'd parley with the spit-fire!" grumbled Captain Painter, again in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard by every one on the veranda.

"Hold your tongue, Painter, and don't open your mouth again unless your opinion is asked," said Colonel Allerton sternly.

Virginia cast a contemptuous glance at Painter and then, turning to the superior officer, said anxiously, "Where is my mother, sir?"

"She is in her room, Miss Lee. You will find a guard before her door, as before your own, not for confinement, but for protection."

"Pardon me, sir," she replied, "but we shall not remain in our rooms or in the house. We shall go at once to the Lodge at the foot of the hill and leave the entire house at your disposal."

"As you like, Miss," the Colonel said. "I am sorry to be the cause of excluding you from your home. It was not our intention to do so, but if you prefer it, you must use your own pleasure."

Virginia bowed coolly and entered the house without further words, going directly to her mother's room. After a short consultation, they hastily packed their personal effects and sent them to the Lodge, whither they themselves followed a few minutes later.

On the veranda Virginia, who realized that, however indignant she might be, she could not better their condition by exciting the animosity of the soldiers, paused to say to Colonel Allerton, "You have, no doubt, shown

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us all the consideration possible under the circumstances and the day may come when I can appreciate it. Just now, of course, the bitterness is too overwhelming to admit a softer sentiment."

"I understand you perfectly, Miss Lee," answered the Colonel with evident sympathy. "I have two daughters of my own and I can easily imagine what their state of mind would be under similar circumstances. Will you permit someone to accompany you to your destination?"

"Thank you, no, sir, it is not necessary," she said, and, taking her mother's arm, passed out from the house. It was the end of the old life. All things from henceforth were new.

A young lieutenant, sitting a little apart from his companions on the veranda, had risen carelessly when Virginia entered the house and sauntered out upon the lawn. Finding a comfortable seat in the shade of a large tree, he established himself there in the hope of obtaining a word with her as she and her mother passed him on their way to the Lodge. He felt intuitively that assurance of "a friend at court" would be a source of comfort to them. As they came down the drive, he left his seat and advanced to meet them. Something familiar in the tall form, broad shoulders, manly bearing, and especially in the grave grey eyes, smote strangely on Virginia's heart and a thrill of happiness that tingled to her finger tips swept over her. The impulse was instantly succeeded by a revulsion of feeling that was almost overpowering as she noticed his Federal uniform and realized its signification.

Mrs. Lee also recognized the officer and with an exclamation of pleasure born of a sense of security lent by the presence of an old friend, she left Virginia's side and hurried forward to greet Philip Blair.

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Blair cordially returned the greeting, expressing the deepest regret that he should see them in so unfortunate a situation. He was turning to Virginia with eager expectancy when his ardor was so chilled by her freezing manner that the very words he meant to utter died on his lips.

"And are we to understand that you are of the number of these men who have turned us from our home, Mr. Blair?" she asked scornfully.

"I count myself fortunate in being able to say that I am, Miss Lee," Blair answered earnestly. "You cannot possibly regret the existence of such circumstances more keenly than I do, but since they do exist, I shall——"

"Pray desist, Mr. Blair. Any explanation you can make is decidedly superfluous," Virginia interrupted with a movement plainly indicating that she considered the interview at an end.

"Pardon me, Miss Lee," Philip returned before standing aside for her to pass, "but you do me an injustice which only time and your own good judgment can set right."

With this he raised his hat, stepped out of the path and allowed the two ladies to proceed on their way.

"Virginia," Mrs. Lee remonstrated when they were out of hearing, "I think you were wrong to treat Mr. Blair so. He might have been of the greatest advantage to us here."

But Virginia's overwrought nerves could stand no more. Great tears gathered in her eyes and she dashed them angrily away as she said, "I do not want him to be of advantage to us. I hate a Yankee with all the ardor of my soul—and most of all, one who can come like a robber into a house where he has once enjoyed the kindest hospitality, bringing a dozen equally unprincipled comrades with him. I have no doubt that he,

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remembering the place, is responsible for their presence here."

Philip Blair turned slowly away. He was in no mood to return to the jokes and games and laughter on the veranda. He sought a sheltered nook on the lawn and spent the remainder of the afternoon trying to think out the problem before him. Although he felt keenly the injustice Virginia had done him, he was genuinely sorry for her and he determined to bide his time until an opportunity offered of proving his fidelity. It was in the hope that he might shield Mrs. Lee and Virginia from anxiety and indignity that he had come to Lee's Summit with Colonel Allerton and his fellow officers. He knew the day might come when they would need such protection and he now gave himself definitely to the resolve that no pardonable display of indignation on Virginia's part should turn him from his purpose.

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CHAPTER XII.

BLAIR watched in vain for an opportunity to speak again with Virginia. He felt so strongly within himself his loyalty to the Lees and the sincerity of his desire to aid them that even in the face of the rebuff he had suffered he still believed he could win back their friendship, could he but find some way to reach Virginia. A few times, indeed, he saw her in the vicinity of the Lodge but always her errand called her in another direction and not once did she look toward the house. It was very evident she had, of herself, no intention of relenting. On Sunday morning Blair noticed Sam waiting with the carriage before the Lodge and a few minutes later, Mrs. Lee and Virginia entered it and were driven to the village church—as he rightly supposed. He was at dinner when they returned and for two or three days thereafter he caught not a glimpse of either of the ladies. Already he was beginning to base his planning upon the supposition that they had abandoned the plantation. He sat one morning on the balcony of a second-story window, ostensibly reading a newspaper, in reality wandering from discussions of war and politics and finance to the question which, the more it baffled him, the more it stimulated his desire to work it out successfully.

As he looked along the highway climbing the succession of hills for a long way in the distance, he could almost imagine the hot summer sun beating down upon himself and Tom as they traversed it for the first time and came within sight of this home. And then he recalled his first appearance here, Kittie's unsuspecting sally, and Virginia's momentary confusion. An observer might have noticed on his face the same *suggestion of a*

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smile which had interested Virginia that summer morning. Nor did the pleased and contented expression leave his countenance as he reviewed the incidents of that visit and the generous hospitality shown him here. It was not hard, now, to put himself in Virginia's place and see in just what light he stood before her.

While he thus mused, Webster left the house and went down to the Lodge and, a little later, Sam brought Beauty and another horse to the gate and waited with them until Virginia and Webster came out, mounted and rode away. At first the incident impressed Philip lightly and he thought of the expedition as a mere pleasure ride, but as he remembered how every highway was infested by stragglers he was conscious of an annoying sense of disapproval. He had reached this state when he heard Painter's voice directly beneath him on the veranda.

"Some devil's errand, of course," Painter was saying as if in reply to a remark which Philip had failed to catch. "She's up to some rebel trick, I'll be bound, and I've half a mind to follow her and put a spoke in her wheel if I find I'm right. Allerton's a d—d lot too soft hearted and easy with 'em. Come on, Patterson, let's go after her. A jant over these hills'll be good for our digestion, eh?"

Suiting the action to the word, the two men left the veranda, went to the stables and immediately set forth on their trail. Philip waited until they disappeared over the first hill and then, calling to Sam to saddle his horse, he also prepared for a ride.

This impromptu procession continued on the way for what seemed to Philip an unreasonable distance. Virginia and Webster, intent upon their destination, scanned anxiously the highways before them and upon either hand, but, all unconscious of the espionage behind them, did not look back or, doing so, took no note of the horse-

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men in the distance. Painter and his companion kept a close watch upon Virginia, purposely lagging far behind that she might not be suspicious of their movements. Philip often lost sight of Virginia but, confident the two men were keeping her in view, he accommodated his pace to theirs, sometimes even stopping for a while that he might not approach near enough for them to recognize him. The sun was fast rising toward the zenith and he had, for half a mile or more, been unable to see either Virginia or the two men when, emerging from a strip of wood through which he had been passing, he saw Painter halting far ahead of him and talking excitedly to Patterson as they both looked along the narrow lane before them and then, with a field glass, searched to right and left a road which crossed their own at right angles. Philip drew his horse to a snail's pace. The conference ended in Painter's galloping off along the road to the left, followed closely by his companion. For a time Philip was at a loss what course to pursue but, reflecting that Painter, at the rate he was going, would soon be out of sight, he also gave his horse the rein and reached, in a short time, the cross-road which had seemed to puzzle Painter. Here he was able to conjecture the dilemma which had presented itself to the two men. Far ahead in the lane which his own road now entered, he recognized, or believed he recognized, Virginia and Webster riding leisurely along, apparently without thought of molestation. He saw, also, as he looked about him, that they were approaching perilously near the Confederate lines and felt sure that Painter, knowing this and not daring to follow Virginia farther, had for the present, given up the pursuit. He paused a moment for reflection and then, confident that Virginia, as soon as she came into the vicinity of the Confederate army, was comparatively safe, he, too, faced

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about and took the road to the right, in which direction lay a Federal camp where some of his friends were stationed.

In the meantime, what of Virginia?

Much to her mother's consternation, she had that morning announced her purpose of going herself to the camp with the papers for which her father had written, alleging her reasons that she wished to consult General Bragg as to their present situation and that she, with only Webster as an attendant, would attract less attention than Hudson and be more apt to make the journey without interference from the Federal soldiers. There was great demur on the part of Mrs. Lee but Virginia, as usual, was able to silence her objections.

The greater part of her journey was accomplished without encountering any one except a wayfarer now and then, bent upon some peaceful errand. As she rode through the wood of which we have already spoken, she heard the strains of a martial band not far away and, as she came toward the open, saw a small body of Federal troops march along the cross-road before her and disappear to the left along the road that Painter afterward took. The circumstance troubled her a little at first, but as she saw the last of the soldiers still marching away from her over the hills and lost the echo of the music, her courage revived and she continued her way, thankful for the sheltering wood which had hidden her from the men in blue. After she entered the long lane which, as she knew, led her into territory protected by Confederate arms, she had no further anxiety. When she reached the outskirts of the Confederate camp, she was accosted by a sentinel in grey.

"Who goes there?" he asked in the usual tone.

"A friend," was the brief reply.

"Who are you?"

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"Virginia Lee and servant."

"What is your mission?"

"I come to General Bragg upon an important errand from my father, Thomas Lee, an officer of the new government at Richmond."

"What credentials have you?"

Virginia produced her father's letter which, with fortunate forethought, she carried in her pocket. The sentinel read the lines with reference to the papers to be delivered and handed it back.

"It is enough," he said.

"Will you direct me to the headquarters, please?"

Virginia asked courteously.

"Continue on this road until you have passed a large camp. Inquire upon the further boundary of that and they will show you where to find General Bragg this morning," was the reply.

With a brief "Thank you," Virginia and Webster rode on.

They found their way according to the instructions of the sentinel and shortly arrived at the place where they were told the commander could be found. Two or three soldiers were waiting without and, addressing one of them, Virginia asked:

"Is President Davis here this morning?"

"It is not my business, Miss, to know whether President Davis is here or not." The answer was curt, but polite withal.

"Mr. Davis *is* here this morning. Tell him a lady wishes to speak with him a moment," she replied in a tone which commanded obedience.

The soldier smiled grimly, bowed stiffly and disappeared. Within were President Davis, Generals Bragg and Longstreet and a half dozen other officers, evidently engaged in serious and not very agreeable discussion.

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The guard approached General Bragg, gave the military salute and stood like an automaton until Bragg, finishing the sentence he was writing, looked up with a frown and a gruff "Well?"

"A lady without desires to speak a moment with His Excellency," the automaton announced, almost without moving a muscle.

"We've no time for women here. Go tell her as much," was the surly response.

"But, sir——"

"Obey orders!" the General commanded.

The automaton saluted as before and, turning squarely, stalked toward the door.

"Hold!" called Bragg as if reconsidering. "Will you receive the lady, Mr. President?"

"As you please. We are very busy," Mr. Davis replied.

"Who is she and what is her errand?" the General asked of the guard.

"She gave me neither name nor errand," was the reply.

"Go and ask," Bragg commanded and the guard marched out.

"Now, gentlemen," Mr. Davis began as if taking up the thread of a broken argument, "we must come to some satisfactory conclusion about this matter."

General Bragg observed a somewhat sullen silence while General Longstreet muttered in a half-audible tone,

"'If to do were as easy as to say what were good to be done, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages, princes' palaces.'"

"*It must be done!*" the President burst out angrily, striking his fist forcibly on the table near him. "These private injuries and personal insults must be ignored and forgotten for the sake of the public weal," he added in a more conciliatory tone.

"Past insults and injuries may be ignored but it is

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asking too much to place men where they will be constantly subject to their renewal and expect this forgiving and forgetting process to continue indefinitely," Longstreet said bitterly.

"Can we not make some other disposition of your forces, Longstreet? What would you say to conducting an expedition against Burnside at Knoxville?" As Mr. Davis asked these questions he glanced furtively at Bragg to see what effect his words had upon that General.

"It can't be done," the latter exclaimed excitedly. "We cannot spare so large a force for a single week."

"Perhaps we can arrange to re-inforce you from Johnston's army, Bragg," the President said.

"It is humiliating to be side-tracked, as it were, to open a path to glory for an aggressor," Longstreet said doggedly, "but it would be better than being forcibly subjected to his tyranny, perhaps. It must be remembered, however, that my forces are in no condition to begin such a campaign. We must be furnished with supplies of food and clothing before we can undertake it."

"'If to do were as easy as to say what were good to be done, etc.,' is an apt maxim in many instances, Longstreet," said Mr. Davis, smiling sarcastically.

In the meantime, the guard returned to the place where Virginia who had dismounted, stood waiting.

"General Bragg asks for your name and your errand, Miss," he said with a slight nod, intended as a bow.

"My name is Virginia Lee. It will not be necessary to repeat my errand," Virginia replied.

"He said your *name* and *errand*," the guard insisted.

"Go tell him my name," she answered in a positive tone. "General Bragg will receive me."

Returning to the commander with his rigid, silent mien, the guard said in answer to the quiet "Well?" "The lady's name is Virginia Lee, sir."

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"Show her in! Show her in! A nice arrangement this, keeping a lady like Virginia Lee waiting outside like a beggar. Don't you know a lady of quality when you see her?" General Bragg was a bit impulsive and hot tempered at his best and the scenes of the morning had not been calculated to soothe a ruffled spirit.

As the guard withdrew, Mr. Davis turned to Longstreet, saying: "If that arrangement will satisfy you, Longstreet, and make peace here, you shall have the supplies of which you speak. I will provide them for you as soon as possible after my return to Richmond."

Virginia, having given the horses in charge of a soldier, had approached the door, so that she stood just outside when the guard appeared and beckoned her to follow him. While the President was speaking, she entered, attended by the faithful black, still carrying the innocent looking bundle. General Bragg rose immediately and came from behind the desk at which he sat, holding out his hand with a pleasant greeting. "Ah! Virginia, this is the silver lining to the clouds of the morning," he said cheerily and, leading her to the President, who stood to receive her, he added almost fondly:

"Your Excellency, this is our Miss Virginia Lee, the daughter of your friend and co-worker, Thomas Lee."

It has been said that a bright eye and a rosy cheek are a stronger attraction even for an intellectual man than the most brilliant mental qualities a woman can display. If this is true, it is not surprising that our heroine won a ready recognition from the Chief Magistrate of the Confederacy. The long ride in the morning breeze, together with the excitement of the hour, had enhanced the usual brightness of her face, while the blood of "Light-horse Harry" coursing through her veins gave her a dignity and independence of bearing that could not fail to demand attention. To be well born 's the best heritage

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in life, not so much for the sake of family pride and illustrious ancestry, as for those physical and mental qualities which bear the unmistakable stamp of good blood and good breeding. And so Virginia stood before these heroes of her little hour, whom, for a time, she worshipped from afar, in all the glory of a long line of noble forefathers, modest but self-possessed, dignified but not bold.

A look of pleasure and approval came over the President's face as he said kindly, "You are no stranger to me, Miss Lee, though I see your face for the first time. I have heard much from your father and from others of your devotion to your home and to the Southern cause."

"You are very kind, sir, to remember the mention of my name. I will try to merit your good opinion," she replied modestly, then, reaching her hand toward Webster for the bundle and removing from it the yellow envelope, she continued, "I came to you this morning to deliver into your hand a package of important papers which my father wishes you to bring to him when you return to Richmond."

"With pleasure," he answered. "Your father spoke to me of these papers but he did not expect you to bring them here. Did you come alone?"

"No, I had the best of companions, our faithful Webster," she said with a grateful glance at the good old slave which he returned with a smile of pride and satisfaction.

"How far had you to come?" Mr. Davis asked with some disapproval in his voice.

"Not very far, less than half a day's journey. We can easily return before nightfall."

"Bragg, she must not return alone. See to it that she has an escort," the President said in a tone of authority.

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"If you please, sir, I prefer to return as I came. I might have been accompanied by our overseer who is a trustworthy man and an employee of my father's since I was a child, but I thought it safer to come with Webster alone."

"By what course of reasoning did you reach such a conclusion, Miss Lee?" he asked, smiling.

"Because suspicion attaches to every man who goes upon a journey now, while the coming and going of a girl are not of sufficient importance to be noticed."

Mr. Davis's smile passed into a pleased chuckle and, turning to his companions he said good-humoredly, "A fine specimen of woman's wit, this, and a goodly morsel of truth in it as well."

"For fine distinctions and good solid conclusions, Virginia is to be counted upon," said General Bragg gallantly.

Virginia smiled her thanks for the compliment and then addressing Mr. Davis said: "I will not detain you longer, Mr. President, from your graver work. Pardon the intrusion and, believe me, I am greatly obliged for the kindness you have shown me."

"Not at all, I assure you. It gives me pleasure to have met you and to hear to your father not only these papers, but an account of this morning's visit. Farewell, and may blessings well deserved attend you." He shook hands very kindly with her and then she turned to General Bragg who said: "You know, Virginia, that I would gladly furnish you an attendant on your homeward ride."

"Thank you, General, but I do not wish it," she replied. "Are we safe in prolonging our stay at Lee's Summit a while yet?" she said as the commander accompanied her to her horse.

"Perfectly so I think," was the confident reply. "It

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will be next to impossible for any army to eject us from the position we are about to take up."

"That assurance alone repays me for my trip to-day," she replied: "I am singularly averse to going to Atlanta unless we are compelled to do so."

The General urged her to remain at the camp until after dinner but this she also declined, saying she had carried with her a lunch which was amply sufficient for herself and Webster until they could reach home. After she was mounted, she thanked the General for the favors he had shown them, bade him good-bye, and then turned her face homeward, followed closely by her attendant.

When General Bragg returned to the council-room, he found his companions awaiting him in silence which was not broken until he had resumed his seat, when Mr. Davis said pointedly:

"If our men were as valiant, determined, and self-sacrificing as our women, our existence as a nation would not be trembling in the balance as it is to-day."

Again there was a moment's silence and then they proceeded to consummate those plans which failed so disastrously within the next few weeks.

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CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE yet near enough to the Confederate camp to feel themselves safe, Virginia and Webster stopped near a small stream to eat their lunch and allow the horses to rest and graze for half an hour or more and then, after leading the horses to the stream to drink and helping his mistress to mount, the slave stood a moment smoothing Beauty's mane and patting her forehead.

"She's a fine hoss, Miss Ginnie," he said lovingly as Beauty laid her head affectionately across his shoulder.

"Yes, she has served me many a good turn and none better than to-day. And, Webster," Virginia said, leaning forward and regarding the negro with a look of gratitude and genuine friendliness, "you have been a good true friend to me all my life and I want you to know that whatever the outcome of this war may be, you and your companions who have stood with us in these dark hours shall never have cause to regret your faithfulness."

"I's willin' to trus' to you an' Marse Lee to do what's right, Miss Ginnie," the slave answered meekly.

"It shall be regarded as a sacred trust, Webster. If the North wins, of course you are free, but there will be many of your race who will suffer for the daily necessities of life."

"There's a heap of 'em a sufferin' now, Miss," he answered.

"We shall always remember and care for you, Webster."

"I ain't none skeered about dat, Miss."

"And if the South should win, my father will be the same considerate master he has always been, and you will never be in want of comfort and kindness in your

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old age. I say this to you to-day because, in our unsettled state, I may not have another opportunity to talk with you like this."

"It's all right, Miss. I'll 'member what you say an' do all I kin to keep de ole place an' de niggahs out'n ha'm." Saying this, Webster climbed into his saddle and they resumed their journey.

The way was so quiet that a feeling of loneliness came over Virginia and an unaccountable dread possessed her as they neared the cross-road where they had seen the Union soldiers in the morning. She refrained from expressing her fears to Webster lest she should not only excite his fears but increase her own anxiety, realizing that in case of an unfriendly encounter, courage and self-possession were half the battle.

"Hark, Webster!" she said at length, reining Beauty to a short stop. "Did you hear anything? I thought I caught the sound of music."

They listened a moment but all was silent about them save the swish, swish of the September wind blowing through the tall hemp which grew on either side of the road and intercepted the view for a long distance and beyond which, as Virginia remembered from the morning, lay the cross-road, the source of her present uneasiness.

"No, Miss, I didn' heah nothin'," Webster replied. "But dese ol' eahs ain' to be trusted no mo'. Dey don' stan' by me like dey use t'."

"It was probably only imagination," the mistress said as she loosened the rein and gave Beauty a hesitating signal to go on.

She strove to forget her fears but in spite of her efforts she found herself constantly straining both eyes and ears for sight or sound that would indicate what lay before them. She was annoyed that the hemp fields should

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lie just in a position to hide that particular road, of all she had to pass on her homeward ride. Finally she could distinguish the end of the fields, the break in their own road, and the narrow strip of wood that lay beyond.

"When we are past that," she thought, "I shall feel safe." She looked carefully in every direction but no sign of life appeared until they were within a short distance of the wood when she suddenly exclaimed:

"Look, Webster, I think I see smoke rising from among the trees yonder! Yes, it is, I am sure it is smoke! What does it mean, I wonder?" she said, checking her horse and looking anxiously at Webster.

"I 'spect it means dere's been a camp in dem woods or is one dere now," he answered.

"What shall we do?" Virginia said, hesitating and looking back over the road they had traveled as if meditating retreat. "It would never do to go back," she said. "This lane is two or three miles long and there is no other road that will not lead us farther from home."

"I'd say to ride on, Miss. It's about all dere is to be done," the negro replied.

"Well, let's be brisk then and pay as little attention as possible if we see any one in the woods," she said, urging Beauty into a gallop.

The column of smoke grew heavier and heavier and, as they neared the corner they saw a goodly number of soldiers running about in the woods, caring for horses or preparing food, while others were seated here and there on the grass eating and drinking.

"Keep close to me, Webster," Virginia said in a low tone.

They were unobserved until they were quite opposite the camp when the Captain sprang up, crying, "Halt!" and a dozen voices joined in "Halt!" "Halt!" "Halt!"

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But Virginia kept up her steady gallop without so much as glancing back.

"After them! After them and bring them back," cried the Captain loudly. "We may get from them the very information we're after."

Four of the soldiers vaulted into the saddles of horses standing near and started in quick pursuit. Virginia cast a hurried glance over her shoulder and crying "Ride, Webster, ride!" she urged her horse forward. Faster and faster they flew and, for a time, it seemed that the small advantage gained in the beginning could not be overcome. Seeing this, the pursuers whipped their horses into a run which soon diminished the distance between them. Looking back from time to time, the young girl saw she must be overtaken. She dare not increase their speed. What should she do! On, on, on they went, the soldiers slowly but surely gaining upon them. The camp, the hemp fields, the wood, disappeared. She could not hold out a quarter of a mile farther. She took a sudden resolve and, slacking her pace, called "Hold, Webster, we can't keep this up longer."

"Dey'll kotch us sartin," the slave said, out of breath.

"Let them," she returned. "We have done nothing to make us either ashamed or afraid."

"What'll you tell 'em, Miss?" he asked.

"Tell them the truth. It can do us no harm, nor any one else."

By this time they had turned around to face their pursuers who rode quickly up to them.

"Why do you follow us thus?" Virginia demanded.

"We want to find out what you know," the leader returned.

"I know nothing that can be of advantage to you," was the reply.

"That remains to be seen," the man answered briefly.

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"Well, ask what you will," the girl said without hesitating.

"*We* have nothing to ask. We came to take you back to the Captain," said the leader, taking hold of Beauty's rein and motioning one of his comrades to take similar charge of Webster's horse.

"You do not mean that we must return to the camp?" Virginia exclaimed in dismay.

"I certainly do mean just that," the man replied.

"Pray, pray allow me to answer your question here. I am far from home and I cannot reach there before nightfall if I must retrace this long distance," she said beseechingly.

"I have nothing to do with that, Miss. I am sorry, but my orders was to bring you back and we only waste time to stand here and argue the matter," saying which, he signed to the party to move forward.

"Then let loose of my rein. I want to return like an honorable woman and not like a felon," Virginia said haughtily.

The long journey was made in silence save for an occasional order from the leader or a joke passed between the other soldiers.

When the camp was reached, the captives were led at once to the commander who rather unceremoniously asked them to alight.

"Please, sir, permit me to remain in my saddle," Virginia said earnestly.

"It wouldn't do. A great deal might be concealed beneath that saddle," was the curt reply.

"Indeed, indeed, sir, it is not true. I carry nothing you may not see."

"Dismount, will you, and have done with this arguing. A lot o' our chicken-hearted fellows are a gettin' you folks so spoiled you expect to be treated with as much politeness

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as if you wasn't in a rebellion against your country," the man said, roughly.

Virginia sprang lightly from her saddle and stood holding her own rein and looking appealingly into the face of her tormentor, who ordered Webster to follow her example. Webster looked at his mistress for her approval. "Get down, Webster," she said, briefly, and turned her eyes once more upon the captain. It was Painter, but Virginia, having only glanced at him on the veranda at home, now failed to recognize him.

"What do you know?" he asked, harshly.

"Nothing."

"Your face belies your words, young lady. You know a great deal," he said, smiling tauntingly.

"I know nothing of any importance to you," she said.

"Why did you not stop when we called halt?"

"Because I was in a hurry to reach home and did not wish to waste time."

"Another time you'll halt, won't you?"

"Perhaps."

"What's your name?"

"Virginia Lee."

"Lee? Related to the old General?" Painter asked, with an evident desire to annoy his victim.

"Distantly."

"Rebel, I suppose?"

"Call me so if you like, there's no disgrace."

"Where've you been to-day?"

Virginia hesitated a moment. "Come, out with it," he insisted.

"I have been to the Confederate camp," she answered, boldly.

"Why did you hesitate?"

"To consider what harm such an answer could do."

"What did you go for?"

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"I went to carry some papers to be sent by a messenger to Richmond."

"Who is the messenger?"

Once more she hesitated slightly and then said, firmly, "President Davis."

"Boys, didn't I tell you we'd get at something here?" Painter said, with a knowing wink at his men. Then, turning to Virginia again, he asked, "Jeff Davis is at Bragg's camp, then?"

"President Davis *was* at the camp this morning, yes, sir."

"*Was?*" Painter repeated, inquiringly. "Do you mean to say he is not there now?"

"I do not know whether he is there now or not," was the reply.

"Didn't they tell you when he would leave?"

"They did not."

"What was the papers you spoke about?"

"I do not know."

"The deuce you don't. A pretty story to expect me to believe. Why did you take them and why do you not know the contents?"

"My father, who is in Richmond, asked for them. They were in a sealed envelope and I took them as they were."

"And you do not know the contents?"

"I do not know the contents."

"What do you know of the Rebels' plans?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Did they tell you nothing?"

"Nothing."

"What papers are you carrying away?"

"I carry nothing away."

"And your servant?"

"Nothing but the small bundle you see."

"Suppose we look into that."

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"As you please," she answered.

Painter took the bundle from Webster's hand, saying, "look here, old man, what are you doing, dancing attendance upon a rebel mistress?"

"I follows Miss Ginnie to my dyin' day, suh."

"Come, come! You'd better be followin' the cannon in defense of your freedom."

"Please, sir," Virginia begged, "have done with us and permit us to go on. We are a long way from home and my mother will be growing very anxious."

"I must do my duty," the Captain answered, sneeringly. "Jackson, unsaddle the horses, you and Evans, and search for concealed papers. Baxter, look to the nigger."

As the soldiers began to execute the command, he himself approached Virginia, meditating a like indignity upon her. She drew back in alarm and threw her head up haughtily.

"Do not come near me," she said in a commanding tone. "I have not a thing about me that would give you one jot of information."

"Of course you'd say that," Painter said, coming nearer and reaching out his hand as if to carry out his purpose.

Virginia sprang quickly aside to avoid his touch, her face pale as death and bearing a look of terror, loathing and scorn.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed.

"So ho! my beauty!" he sneered, "You're a trifle skittish. Where are your pockets?" and making a quick movement he caught her roughly by the arm.

"Hold!" cried a voice from the outskirts of the crowd. "This has gone far enough!"

"Who are you that you should interfere with me?" the Captain asked angrily, turning swiftly to face the speaker.

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"I am the man to report you at headquarters if you bully this lady any longer," was the indignant reply. "You know what Colonel Allerton would say to such conduct."

Virginia shot a glance of gratitude at the man who thus came to her defence. She had been too intent upon her desperate situation to note his approach during her encounter with Painter, nor did she observe his agitation as that individual continued to press his questions. For some minutes he had walked up and down within hearing of what was being said, clenching his fists in anger and bestowing frowns and muttered threats upon his superior in office.

"What have I done that it is not my duty to do, sir?" the Captain asked.

"You are carrying your persecution of an innocent woman to an infamous extent and it must stop," was the reply.

Here the soldiers deputed to search the slave and the horses, reported everything all right and the Captain, turning to Virginia, said doggedly, "You are quite sure you carry no concealed papers?"

"I give my word on my honor as a lady, sir, that I have not a scrap of paper of any sort about me," she answered at first, but hastened to add, "No, that isn't quite true. I have here a part of a letter from my father in which he directs the papers to be taken to the camp. I carried it with me to insure my admission to General Bragg's presence. You may read for yourself what he says," and she indicated the lines referred to.

Painter looked at the letter for a moment. "I reckon we'll have to let you go," he said sullenly. "But if any harm comes of this they shall know at headquarters

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where to lay the blame," he added, with an irate glance at the man who had thwarted his purpose.

"All right, Captain, I'll shoulder the whole blame if any harm comes of the affair," the man answered, smiling good-humoredly. "But the young lady must not go alone, now that you have delayed her so long. It may be nightfall before she can reach home."

"We have other affairs to attend to than escorting rebels over the country," Painter retorted. "She set out alone with this old nigger; let her return as she came."

"Indeed, sir," Virginia said with a grateful glance at her defender whom she had already recognized as Philip Blair, "I am not at all afraid and by riding fast I can reach home before dark. You are most kind but an escort is unnecessary."

"It is my good fortune, Miss Lee to be riding your way," Blair said as he drew nearer her, "and if you will allow me I shall esteem it a pleasure to attend you and protect you, if necessary, from another annoyance of this kind before you reach home."

"Thank you, Lieutenant Blair, you are kinder to me than I deserve," Virginia said in an undertone as Philip assisted her to her saddle.

"No, Miss Lee, I am only fortunate in having found so early an opportunity of showing my good intentions," Philip answered.

Virginia and Webster turned into the highway, riding slowly to give Philip time to procure his horse from the farther side of the camping ground and come up with them.

"Pardon me, Miss Lee," he said as he joined her, "but it is not wise for you to ride abroad alone now.

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I fancy I arrived in the nick of time to save you from a most annoying situation."

"It was necessary for me to make the journey," she replied. "I am forced to the performance of many duties now that I should not dream of undertaking at another time."

"I know, I know," Philip answered quickly. "There is not a form of hardship or suffering that war does not bring with it. Have you been long alone as you are now, you and your mother?"

"Since the war began. My father has been in Richmond for more than two years."

"Two years!" Philip repeated. "And I—do you know what I've been doing these two years?"

"I'm afraid I could guess very accurately," Virginia said, steadily returning Blair's earnest look.

"Do you remember I told you that last evening at Lee's Summit that I should certainly return?" he asked, determined to make the most of what seemed an opportune moment for recovering Virginia's lost esteem.

"Yes, I believe I do," she answered as if impelled by some force other than her own will.

"Well, I've been fighting my way back these two years," Philip said with one of those ingenuous smiles which, from the first, had won Virginia's confidence. "I've been literally fighting my way toward Chattanooga because I knew I could serve my country here as well as elsewhere and something told me I could be of use at the same time to my friends at Lee's Summit."

At mention of Lee's Summit a look of scorn flashed across Virginia's face and, turning quickly from Philip, she gazed stolidly along the road before them, torn by contending emotions of resentment and gratitude.

Philip saw the change but he continued earnestly,

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"You mistake me utterly, Miss Lee, if you suppose I came into your home for the sake of the easy berth I could find there during our weeks of waiting before Chattanooga. I came because I found these men were determined to take possession of the place and I hoped to serve your interests there. Will you not believe me, Miss Lee?" He asked the question in a tone so earnest and so manly that Virginia could not but feel the meanness of persisting in her unfriendly attitude.

"I do believe you, Lieutenant Blair, of course," she answered sadly, "but oh! I am so disappointed and unhappy and I feel that every thing I have held dear and sacred is so surely slipping from me that sometimes the bitterness supplants every other feeling in my heart."

"I know it, Miss Lee, I know it all," Blair replied with the utmost sympathy in his voice, "and my sole purpose in coming into your home was that I might have some small part in relieving the bitterness that I know must inevitably come to you. Not only that, Miss Lee, but the day is coming when you may need a friend in our ranks and I am hoping you will allow me to supply that need."

Virginia's face had lost its scorn and she was silently, sadly thoughtful for a time. She was trying to adjust herself to the full meaning of Blair's words.

"There must be other battles here, of course," she said at last, "but do you think they will come soon—before winter?"

"Yes, I think so," the Lieutenant answered. "Things seem to be shaping themselves to that end. After the new general arrives affairs will not go on this way very long."

"What general?" Virginia asked.

"General Grant."

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"He is coming then?" Virginia said anxiously.

"Yes, he is expected any time now."

Virginia's mind reverted to what had been said of General Grant's coming when the Confederate officers visited Lee's Summit. "General Bragg says that General Grant is the only man in the Union army that he fears." The words sounded as plainly in her ears now as when Mrs. Stewart uttered them and a shadow of certain disaster passed over her spirit.

"Do you think, Lieutenant Blair, that the Union forces will be able to drive General Bragg out of this part of the state?" she asked with a sadness that touched Philip. He looked at her hesitatingly for a moment.

"Tell me truly, please, what you think," she urged. "You can trust me with your frank opinion. The matter is of personal importance to us, you know."

"I think, Miss Lee, that sooner or later the Union forces will drive General Bragg out of the state and from the field altogether," he answered firmly but kindly.

Within the year, Virginia would have dismissed the words and the speaker with scorn if not with derision, but her father's warnings and her own judgment were gradually working a wondrous change in her opinions.

"You think, then, there is no hope for the Confederate cause?" she asked.

"None, Miss Lee, none whatever," he replied too kindly and dispassionately to arouse her animosity. "The resources of the North are too vast. We can muster men and means for months or years after the Confederacy has been drained of both. It is not a question of honor or bravery but of ability to hold out."

"The disparity between the North and the South is not to be compared with that between England and the

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colonies in the Revolution?" she argued, but evidently without real faith in her own reasoning.

"Certainly not, but our highest interests and best efforts are engaged now and will continue to be engaged, whereas England was absorbed in European wars at the time of the Revolution and the Colonies were a secondary consideration altogether," Blair returned.

"But does God count for nothing in this struggle? You cannot know, Lieutenant Blair, how I have prayed, how we have all prayed, for the success of the southern cause," she exclaimed fervently.

"Think you, Miss Lee, there have been no prayers offered in the North?" he asked.

"I have not thought much about the North."

"That's just the trouble. If we had each thought more about the other this conflict might have been avoided.

"Do you wonder, Lieutenant Blair, when you see the condition our home is in that we are bitter in our feelings toward the Federal government? And ours is but a shadow of the calamity that has come upon most southern homes."

Philip listened with evident interest and sympathy. "Your argument begins at the wrong place, Miss Lee. Your present circumstances are deplorable indeed and no one regrets this more than I, who would gladly clear your home for you if it were possible, but it cannot be. It is a natural result of this war that homes are broken up and lives are wrecked and embittered and sacrificed. The moral phase of the question must be referred to the beginning of the conflict. Now that we are in, the measures that will end it soonest are the best."

"Yes, I admit that we began it, but we must even go back of that," Virginia replied. "You would not

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expect us to submit to tyranny, being Englishmen as well as yourselves?"

"And back of that, Miss Lee. It is not a question of tyranny but a question concerning the foundation principle of our government. But for the incidental matter of slavery, this theory about the rights of states, which is a menace to the very existence of the government, would probably have remained a widely diffused political principle, to vex and disturb our peace and safety continually. The institution of slavery naturally gave impetus to the belief in secession in the South and it simply remains for us to prove by the sword which theory shall prevail. The settling of the dispute once for all will be a great national blessing. Of course I have a firm and abiding faith in the principles for which we are fighting, yet I have no doubt many of us would have believed as you do had our private interests been at stake as yours were."

"Thank you," Virginia replied, "I am glad you are generous enough to say so much for us. As for slavery, while I have never been an advocate of it in the abstract, yet I doubt whether negroes as a race will realize any real benefit from their freedom for generations to come, if they ever do. This war will set them at variance with the whites of the South in a way they have never been before. They will have to look to themselves for the necessities of life and they are totally unfit for such responsibility."

"The problem of what to do with the race will confront us when the war is over, Miss Lee. We are only making a beginning of reform now."

"But I have not given up the struggle by any means, Lieutenant Blair," Virginia said, smiling. "You will find we are not exhausted for a long time yet."

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"Pardon me, and believe me that I have too high a regard for you to speak merely for the purpose of discouraging you, but to protract this war is utterly useless and the day will come when you will see it as I do. It is a waste of blood and gold. The result is as apparent now as it will be a year from now—or two years or three or four, should it require that long to decide the question," Philip said.

A genial discussion of one phase or another of the great topic of the day occupied the entire homeward journey. As Blair assisted Virginia to dismount, she said with genuine sincerity:

"I am greatly obliged to you Lieutenant Blair, for the kindness you have shown me. How did you happen to be at the camp just in time to rescue me from the persecutions of that man?"

"I didn't just happen to be there," he answered with a smile. "I was there for the purpose of looking after you."

"I don't understand you," she said curiously. "How did you know I should be there?"

"I saw you ride away this morning and, fearing some such experience as the one you had awaited you, I followed to be at hand if you should need me."

"You cannot mean that you followed me all the way to the Confederate camp?"

"No, I could not do that, but I followed you almost to the Confederate lines and, knowing you were comparatively safe after you were within those, I took another road to a Federal camp a few miles distant. It was perhaps your 'good angel' that led me toward home in time to help you out of trouble."

Thanking him once more, Virginia bade him good-evening and entered the house. In spite of the scorn

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and resentment that her late experience had engendered toward the Union soldiers, a grateful feeling crept into her heart toward this man for his kindness. There is no stronger or more lasting sentiment in a woman's soul than that which draws her to a man who has protected or defended her in an hour of need.

After this, the acquaintance between Philip Blair and Virginia Lee developed rapidly. It was remarkable how frequently he found occasion to lift his hat and exchange a word of greeting with her or even to dismount as he rode to or from the great house and, with his arm through his bridle rein, walk by her side as long as their path lay in the same direction, sometimes even changing his own course that he might accommodate his way to hers.

And Virginia? She was fast learning to watch for his coming with an interest she did not understand nor try to analyze at first, often discerning his tall form among the trees and shrubbery on the lawn when her mother or the Hudsons would never have noticed him at all. Such was the state of affairs when an event occurred that was destined to draw them into even closer and more frequent association than before.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE warm October sun still fell aslant across the floor of Mrs. Hudson's kitchen which Sallie, whom Mrs. Lee had brought with her to the Lodge, had scoured in the early morning, muttering many a complaint to herself about "Mis' Hudson's clean ways."

"Be glad," she said, "when de Yankees gits done sojerin' an' goes back norf whar dey b'longs an' Missus an' Miss Ginnie takes me an' goes back to de great house—no sich goins on dar—Dinah 'n Missus done got no nasty foolishness 'bout dem. Dey scrubs de dirt off de flo' ob co's, but dey leabs de boa'ds an' 'pears like Mis' Hudson done want me to scratch off part de boa'ds wid dis yere san'. Can say dese yere scooped out places roun' de hya'th is cause de house is ol' if dey wants to, but I say Mis' Hudson done scooped dem out wid san' an' de scrub bresh."

But Sallie knew better than to slight her work, however obnoxious its performance might be to her feelings, and every inch of the floor had been scoured and mopped and polished until even Mrs. Hudson smiled approvingly. 'Twas a maxim of hers to keep her kitchen floor so clean that she'd "just as soon eat off it as off the table." To this end, the kettle of boiling water was prepared to wash up the floor as regularly as the morning dishes were washed, and at least twice in the week the scrubbing brush with sand or lye was in requisition to guard against the grease spots that might appear if this precaution were neglected. On this particular morning, the water had dried off quickly and left the boards as white as wood can be made and, as was said before, the

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sun still came in aslant at the south door and windows, although the row of pies on the pantry shelf was complete, the White Mountain cake towered in snowy splendor in the corner cupboard, a great roll of sweet golden butter had just been brought in from the milk house and a pair of fowls had been hung away to "plump" for the Sunday dinner, while even the light bread was ready to be taken from the oven; for Mrs. Hudson was a New Englander by birth and, until the year before her marriage, had lived in Vermont with an aunt, one of the severest representatives of the "old school," with whom it would have been insufferable laziness to allow the washing, the sweeping or the baking to encroach in the least on the dinner hour. It was Mrs. Hudson's pride to have all trace of these "extras" out of sight by ten o'clock and never, under the gravest interference, did she allow eleven to find her not ready to don a fresh apron and enter upon the preparation of the noon meal. To-day the last flaky loaf was taken from the oven and wrapped in the clean white cloth with the baking pan turned over it to steam and soften the crust and the good housewife was untying the high-bibbed cooking apron when Sam's woolly head popped in at the kitchen door.

"Whew!" he sniffed as the appetizing odor of the new bread and fresh pies floated to him from the pantry door. "Bettah keep de do' shet when de Yanks goes by ef y' wants dem good things fo' yo' sef, Miss Hudson."

"I s'pose if I can trust you I can trust the Yankees, Sam?" Mrs. Hudson returned.

"Speakin' of Yankees, dere's one on 'em mos' dead down heah in de road 'long o' ou' place," the negro said carelessly.

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"Where, Sam, what do you mean?" Mrs. Hudson asked quickly.

"Down by de bottom fiel', Miss Hudson. 'Spect he's done been stealin' ou' watah millions down dere and got hissef int' trouble."

"What do you mean, that some of our folks have killed the man?" Mrs. Hudson asked with some concern.

"Dunno's ou' folks done it. He's ben shot, do' an' his hoss too. Dey's both a layin' down in de road. Me'n Jeff wus a comin' 'long an' seen 'im but we didn' know nothin' bettah'n t' leave 'im fo' 'is own folks t' see aftah," Sam explained.

Mrs. Hudson's interest was aroused. She was naturally a humane woman and here was a case that appealed to her strongly. Her early married life had been blessed with two children, a son and a daughter, both older than Virginia. The little girl died when she was but six years old, leaving, in the hearts of her parents, an empty place for the little heiress of the estate which had been their home ever since. For this reason they had been especially fond of Virginia, loving and petting and humoring her almost as much as her own parents did. When the boy grew up, he was taken into the business house of an uncle in the North and he there learned to love the principles which prevailed among the friends and relatives with whom he was associated. When the war broke out, Will Hudson found himself in the same strait that embarrassed Mr. Cunningham, conflicting claims clamoring for his support upon either side. For a long time he pondered the question, weighing the disappointment and disapproval of his parents against his own inclination and his sense of right. The impulse of youthful spirits at length prevailed, and one day, in the early part of '62, a letter came to the Lodge announcing to the

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overseer and his wife that their only son had enlisted in the service of the Federal government. There was a stormy scene, the father mortified and indignant that his own interests and influence should weigh so little with his son, the mother sorrowfully trying to intercedè in behalf of that son.

"Well, William, it's no more than we might have expected, sendin' the boy off so young to live at the North," she said, timidly.

"But has he no regard for us and for his early training? Don't he care that he's helpin' to take the very bread out of our mouths?" exclaimed the father, excitedly.

"Come, come, father, Willie was always a good boy and he didn't look at it that way. No doubt when the war is over he'll be helpin' us like a man if we are in need."

"I shan't want any o' his help. Pretty tale we've got to tell Mr. Lee and Virginia."

"I'll tell 'em, William, and I've no notion at all they'll be angry with us about it. 'Twant a fault of ours, I'm sure."

"It's no fault of mine, at any rate. He didn't get his northern whims and prejudices from me or my folks, thank God!" complained Hudson, not wishing to cut his wife, so much as to vent the spleen that rankled in his bosom.

"Now, William, that 'was an unkind thrust and unworthy of you, but I won't resent what you say in the heat of passion. When you've had time to think it over you'll be ashamed of that speech."

Hudson, saying no more, put on his hat and went out to his work, lest his indignation should betray him into further offences of the same kind. After that, there was very little discussion of the son's actions. His letters came regularly, and Mrs. Hudson answered them with

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kind, motherly missives, sending their love, but telling him nothing of their chagrin over the step he had taken. It was this personal experience that led her to be interested in the Yankee soldier lying wounded almost at her very door.

"It won't do to leave him there. He may die for want of help. Come, Sam, we'll go down to the lot and speak to Mr. Hudson about it," she said, in response to the negro's last remark.

"William, Sam says there is a wounded man in the road down by the bottom field and he's 'most dead. What can we do about it?" the good woman called, as she came within speaking distance of her husband.

"Why, I don't know, Hannah. What kind of a man is he, a soldier?" Hudson asked, going on with his work.

"Yes, he's a Union soldier, I think, from what Sam says," she replied, with some hesitation.

"Then we'll let the Union soldiers look after him," Hudson said, coolly.

"But, William, I saw a lot of them ride away in the gray of the morning, and there is no sign of them about the place. If they are all away he might not be found before night, and that may be too late. His horse was shot, too, and they are both layin' down there together," she said, coaxingly.

"That explains the shootin' I heered in the night. I s'pose he's been prowlin' and maybe robbin' the melon patch and somebody's took him to task," said Hudson, working away with as little concern as ever.

"But, William, it's inhuman to let him stay there and die, to say nothin' of un-Christian. Won't you even go down and look at him?" she pleaded.

"What can I do? Do you s'pose I'll take a wounded Yankee into my house? And there's Mrs. Lee and Vir-

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ginia, d'you s'pose they'd stay if I did after comin' there to git red of 'em?"

Something of the same argument had occurred to Mrs. Hudson, but sympathy for the helpless man was stronger than argument.

"Please go and look at him, anyway, William," she begged, hoping the sight of the sufferer might arouse her husband's better nature.

"Well, Hannah, for your sake I'll go down and have him taken to the great house. There the Yankees can take care of him or let 'im die, just as they like," Hudson said, a little sullenly, and, telling Sam and two or three other negroes to follow, he turned his steps toward the spot where it was said the wounded man lay.

When they were gone, Mrs. Hudson put on her bonnet and ran up to the great house to see what preparation she could make there for the soldier's comfort, imagining to herself, by the way, what her feelings would be if Willie were wounded or dying and no one willing to help him because his coat was blue. She found, as she had feared, that the men had all left the house that morning and would not return until after dark.

Mrs. Hudson prepared a bed in a remote part of the house, where the wounded man would be least annoyed by noise and confusion, and then went back to the Lodge to get her "dinner started" not wishing to aggravate her husband's ruffled spirits by a late or unsavory meal. With Sallie's help she soon had affairs in the kitchen running smoothly, and found a minute's time to run into the little sitting-room to tell Mrs. Lee what had occurred.

"We must go up to the house, Mrs. Hudson, and see what can be done for the man. He may need the attention of a surgeon at once," said Mrs. Lee, rising and folding up her work.

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When Hudson and the negroes appeared at the gate with their burden, Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Hudson joined them, and in a short time the soldier was resting in a comfortable bed. A negro was despatched to the village for a surgeon, while Mrs. Lee, who, from long experience among the blacks had acquired some skill in ministering to the sick, did all she could for the man's immediate relief. Dinner was over at the Lodge before the surgeon arrived, and Virginia and her mother were watching together in the sick room where the soldier lay still unconscious. The bullet was quickly and deftly removed and the wound dressed.

"This was a close call," the doctor said, as he completed his work. "An inch higher and this bullet would have finished the story of life for him."

Mrs. Lee remained at the house until the officers returned in the evening, when she relinquished her charge to them for the night.

"Virginia," she said, as she entered the room where her daughter sat when she returned to the Lodge, "You can't think how glad I am that we did not allow our prejudices to keep us from doing a merciful act. This wounded man is Tom Healy who came to Lee's Summit that summer with Lieutenant Blair. Do you remember him?"

"Of course I remember him. We have almost been entertaining an angel unawares, haven't we, mother?" Virginia said, laughing.

"I fancy we have won Lieutenant Blair's friendship forever. He expresses the greatest appreciation of our kindness," said Mrs. Lee.

"I fancy Lieutenant Blair's friendship for us was already assured, mother. He doesn't impress me as a man who would make a pretence of a sentiment he did not

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really feel," Virginia replied, adding, "However, I am glad for his sake as well as the man's own that we did what was right."

After this there was constant coming and going between the Lodge and the house, Virginia herself often visiting the patient with delicacies prepared in Mrs. Hudson's kitchen. On such occasions, Philip Blair made it convenient to be on the veranda or in the hall or even by Tom's bedside for a bit of conversation with the handsome little rebel, as she was called by the soldiers who made merry with the Lieutenant over his evident weakness for her society. As the days passed and the acquaintance ripened, he was emboldened to return with her along the shady drive or loiter beneath the spreading trees, now gorgeous in the varied hues of autumn. Gradually, too, he began to "drop in as he was going past" on one trivial errand or another until at last he made so free as to join Virginia on the little porch at the Lodge with no better excuse than because he was lonesome and had nothing else to do. Such visits soon became so much a matter of course that never a day went by that the young Lieutenant did not find some opportunity to cultivate the friendship which was fast becoming dangerously interesting to them both. Walking, riding, visiting, reading, the days that had hitherto dragged wearily upon Philip's hands sped all too swiftly until Tom had been more than three weeks at Lee's Summit and the surgeon pronounced him strong enough to be removed to the hospital camp, whither Lieutenant Blair accompanied him.

"I'll be back in a day or two," Blair said to Virginia when he left. "I must stay that long with Tom to see that he is all right after the journey, but it will not be necessary for me to remain longer, I think. Shall I be welcome when I return?"

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"The children of the Old Dominion pride themselves on their hospitality, Lieutenant Blair," she replied.

Philip regarded her so steadily and intently for a moment that her eyes fell before his gaze. "That is what you told me once before, do you remember?" he said.

Virginia looked quickly and brightly up at him. "And you were three years in taking advantage of the assurance," she said laughingly.

"Let us hope I shall not be detained so long again," Philip replied earnestly although he smiled as he added, "your answer is a little indefinite but it is enough to bring me."

It was during this absence that Virginia awoke to the real nature of her interest in Philip Blair. She had felt so sure of her undying allegiance to the southern cause and of her inveterate hatred of Yankees and everything pertaining to them that no thought of danger in her association with Blair had come to her. She was shocked and alarmed by the loneliness that now oppressed her. What could it mean? Certainly not that she, Virginia Lee, was developing an attachment for a Yankee officer! She could not, would not believe it! And when he returned she meant to be too busy for a renewal of the late intimacy. This determination lasted until the end of the third day and then Virginia began to feel restless and ill at ease and to wonder why Lieutenant Blair did not return as he said he would, finding herself again and again watching the highway for a rider who did not come. Not a horseman appeared on the distant hills that was not cited by her quick eye, but none materialized into the form for which she looked. As one by one she counted the days, four, five, six, and then a week, ten days, two weeks, all the loneliness came back to her, her good resolutions were forgotten and she began to long

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for sight of the absent soldier or for some word to tell her why he had not returned.

Once when she rode by the side of Colonel Allerton for a little way, a question concerning the lieutenant rose to her lips but she suppressed it with scorn lest she display an undue interest in a man who was almost an utter stranger to her. Soon he became to her but one more pleasant association dropped out of her life, a "ship that had passed in the night" and had drifted on with the things that "were," leaving her, as before, with a burden of care and responsibility. Early in November a Confederate soldier came to the Lodge in disguise with a message from General Bragg who sent them the most hopeful assurances of relief from their unfortunate situation before many weeks should pass. He dare not attempt to communicate anything definite to them, the messenger said, but he urged them to feel no great uneasiness and to bear their present annoyance and privation as patiently as possible. Thus encouraged, Virginia renewed her efforts among the blacks and Hudson continued the labor in the fields, notwithstanding the apparent uselessness of such a course.

Colonel Allerton had, from the first, shown a friendly spirit toward the Lees and had proven himself a willing and efficient protector of their interests. He, of course, could not prevent the ravaging of their fields and store-houses and probably had not the inclination to do so, regarding this, like the seizure of their home, as a rightful and honorable necessity of war. But he persistently forbade all ruthless mutilation of the premises and sought to restrain lawless and unjust infringement of the rights of the owners. This course had gradually won Virginia's admiration and respect in spite of her antipathy toward him. One event, particularly, contributed to this result.

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On a cool frosty evening, when a chilling wind, after a bright sunny day, suddenly rushed down from the north, Captain Painter and two or three kindred spirits determined to make the house more cheerful and comfortable by building a fire in the great fireplace in the parlor. They went in search of fuel and were helping themselves at the wood pile that had been hauled in for winter when Painter exclaimed maliciously:

"What an excellent back-log one of the fine old trees on the lawn would make! Besides it would be a capital way to tantalize my young lady, who assumes such high and mighty airs!" and, seizing an axe, he called out, "Come on, boys, we'll down one of them just for spite!"

His companions, who were ordinarily of less despicable temperament than himself, had been taking an extra allowance of "fire water" to counteract the frostiness in the air and they were now in the mood for a bit of excitement, so they fell in with the proposition readily enough and followed their leader in high spirits. A crowd of pickaninnies trotted at their heels while Sam, who had been in the kitchen trying to inveigle Dinah out of a piece of the mince pies she was baking and who chanced to pass the wood-pile on his way to the barn just in time to hear Painter's bravado remark, ran with all speed by a roundabout path to the Lodge and gasped out breathlessly to Virginia who stood in the doorway:

"Dey's a cuttin' de big trees down on de lawn, Miss Ginnie. Run quick! It's Painter an' he's a doin' it to tease you, I heered 'im say it a minute ago!"

Like a flash Virginia darted away, not heeding, even if she heard, her mother's insistent call, Sam following close behind, eager to see the fun which he confidently expected would ensue.

By the time Virginia reached the scene of action,

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guided to the spot by the sound of voices, the men were gathered about one of the finest trees on the lawn and Painter, proposing to give the first strokes, had already raised his axe when the young girl shouted loudly:

"Captain Painter, don't touch that tree!"

"Why not?" he asked, laughing coarsely and again raising the axe which he had involuntarily lowered at the first sound of her voice.

"It is a sin to cut such a tree and you shall not do it!" she answered and, springing forward, she threw her arms lovingly about the tree which sheltered the little summer house where she had spent so many happy hours.

"How dare you!" he exclaimed, restraining the stroke he had meant to make in spite of her command. "Get out or you'll be hurt. I mean to cut this tree."

"You will not cut this tree!" was the determined reply.

"Vixen!" he cried angrily. "Are you afraid of nothing?"

"Not of you," Virginia replied boldly, "you wouldn't dare to strike me with that axe."

"Take her away, men, peaceably if she will, by force if necessary," Painter called to his companions.

Virginia turned toward the soldiers and, planting her back firmly against the tree, said defiantly:

"I'll report the first man that touches me, to Colonel Allerton. You know you would not dare to do this in his presence!"

"Take her away, I say! Are you all dastardly cowards?" Painter yelled in a rage.

The tempestuous scene had thrown such a damper over the spirits of the men that Painter's influence was lost. They stood aloof from the tree while one of them said doggedly:

"Take her away yourself, if you want it done."

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Virginia braced herself and, tossing her head, looked triumphantly at Painter who, trembling with passion, shouted, "I'll have a back log from this lawn for our fire!" And with two or three bounds he reached another tree and buried his axe in its trunk before opposition from anyone was possible. The young protector, divining his purpose, was not far behind and before he could extricate his axe and prepare for another stroke, she again interposed her own body between the tree and its despoiler. Flinging the axe away, Painter seized the girl rudely by the arm.

"I don't mean to hurt you if I can help it, young woman," he said sullenly, "but I will cut this tree."

"O, no you won't," Virginia retorted tantalizingly as she tightened her hold about the tree.

The bark tore her tender hands as Painter gave her body a vigorous wrench and she feared she must give up if this struggle continued long. She felt her hands slipping in spite of all she could do, when suddenly, without an instant's warning, there was a loud thug, Painter was sprawled headlong on the ground, six feet from where they stood and Colonel Allerton's voice cried out:

"Take what you deserve, Painter! Look after him, men. He's a villainous coward and you can tell him I said so when he comes to his senses."

Turning to Virginia, he said, "I am sorry, Miss Lee, that you must be repeatedly subjected to this man's insults. He is a good fighter and, as such, he holds his rank and position. Personally, he is not fit to associate with gentlemen and ladies."

"Thank you, Colonel Allerton. I cannot tell you how I thank you for your goodness. I should not have come here, I suppose, but I couldn't bear the thought of having

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these trees cut down. They have been like human companions to me all my life."

"They shall not be cut down, either. Even Painter will not venture to disobey my express orders," Colonel Allerton replied.

Virginia was trembling all over from the nervous strain and the excitement, while her hands were bleeding from the wounds the bark had inflicted.

"Come, Miss Lee, take my arm and permit me to see you to the Lodge in safety. You have shown yourself a brave young woman and I promise to see that your efforts are not in vain. The trees shall be safe from this day on."

Virginia submitted as she would not have done a month before and walked meekly by the Colonel's side. Again the impulse came to ask for tidings of Lieutenant Blair, but she dismissed it as before. At the door of the Lodge she thanked Colonel Allerton for this as well as for other favors he had shown her.

"I am glad to make some compensation to you for depriving you of the comforts of your home for so long, Miss Lee, and I want to tell you that in the event of our success here you shall have the benefit of my protection so far as it is of any use to you," he replied earnestly.

"You are very kind, Colonel Allerton. The time was when I should have spurned such an offer from a Federal soldier, but I have learned many lessons in the last few weeks. If we need your protection we shall certainly take advantage of it and be grateful to you for it."

The month had advanced past the middle when, one cloudy, gloomy evening, Virginia stood at the window looking out into the gathering darkness. A number of soldiers presently came riding out of the gate and took

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the road toward the village. She recognized some of them as belonging to the party at the house, among them Colonel Allerton.

"An evening like this always gives me a desolate feeling," she said plaintively to her mother. "I should be willing to-night to see this war ended on almost any conditions. Life is too short to be wasted so and we can never be repaid for what it is costing us. We are all growing old before our time."

"It is the cloudy evening, Virginia, that makes you feel so. Come out into the kitchen and see the roaring fire Hudson has made in the fireplace and you'll feel better," Mrs. Lee answered cheerily.

"Yes, it is the weather, I suppose," Virginia answered with a little sigh. "Then, too, I am always uneasy when Colonel Allerton is away. I feel, so long as he is at the house, that we have one friend who will look after our interests there. He is a fine man, mother, and I am thankful he happened to be in command of the men in our home. They say there are no circumstances so bad but they might be worse and I suppose Colonel Allerton was sent as the redeeming feature of our present situation."

Virginia's tone brightened as she followed her mother into the kitchen during this speech and came within the glow of the cheerful open fire. Lanier is reported as saying that two things indispensable to a real home are music and an open fire, while someone else complains that "our ancestors were accustomed to gather around the blazing hearthstone for their holiday festivities, but we, in these latter days, sit around a hole in the floor." That the world at large does not appreciate the kindly influence of the fire-light is attested by the fact that so many of our modern houses are built without grate or fireplace

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and so many women are willing to shut up those creators of cheer and comfort and drape the mantels with scarfs and throws to avoid the dust and dirt of the open fire.

The dancing lights and shadows, the humming of the tea-kettle, and the busy preparation for supper, speedily restored Virginia's cheerfulness and it was a pleasant, light-hearted company that sat at Mrs. Hudson's table that evening. Three hours later the house was dark and still and the inmates were sleeping soundly when there came a loud rapping at the door and an excited voice called from without:

"Get up and come quick, the house is all on fire."

Shouts of "Fire!" "Fire!" "Fire!" followed in rapid succession. Hudson and his wife sprang out of bed and shouted to Mrs. Lee and Virginia and, hastily wrapping themselves in the bedclothes, they all prepared to rush out of the house, supposing it to be the Lodge that was on fire. As they came into the kitchen, they saw, through the window, the red reflection in the sky and the tall column of lurid smoke rising above the trees at the top of the hill.

It was a trying scene that followed. Mrs. Hudson was shouting to the messenger outside to know what part of the house the fire was in and where it started, Mrs. Lee threw herself in a paroxysm of weeping upon a settee in the chimney corner, while Virginia, controlling her own emotion, told Hudson to run to the burning house and see if anything could be done to save it and then turned to quiet and console her mother.

As soon as she could bring her companions to a realization of what they were doing, they all dressed themselves and hurried to the brow of the hill where they could watch the havoc the fire was making. The interior of the house was already largely consumed. Here was a

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room not yet attacked by the flames, with its furnishings plainly visible through the open windows by the light from the adjacent apartments, and Virginia easily recognized her own little bureau and bedstead and writing table, beyond all hope of rescue, standing ready to feed the greedy element in a few minutes more. In other places the furniture and the partition walls were burning rapidly or had fallen already into the fiery abyss below, while clouds of glowing smoke rolled up against the windows as if seeking an escape. In a little while the flames, too, came lapping at the window frames and, bursting through, flung their long arms around the outer walls, crept along the eaves and up the shingled roof until they enveloped the entire structure from foundation to summit and then, leaping higher and higher, seemed gleefully proclaiming their triumph to the world. Mrs. Lee and Virginia stood clinging to each other, overcome by grief and a sense of their powerlessness. Captain Painter hurried to them as soon as he knew of their presence and disclaimed all knowledge of the fire. Realizing the disrepute in which he was held by Colonel Allerton and the ladies of Lee's Summit, he was trembling visibly from nervous agitation as he stammered helplessly:

"I hope you don't think I had anything to do with this, Miss Lee. I swear I knowed nothing of it 'til I heard the alarm. Is there anything I can do?"

"No, thank you," Virginia replied coldly. "There is nothing anyone can do, and it doesn't matter much as to the cause. In a few minutes more we shall be homeless and that is the important thing."

As Painter turned away, Colonel Allerton, who had seen the fire from a distance, came tearing along the highway and up the drive, shouting angrily as he came within hearing:

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"What has happened? Who has done this? Whose fault was it? Painter, it was you, you d—— rascal."

Painter vehemently swore his innocence and the Colonel, catching sight of Mrs. Lee and Virginia, hastened to their side, exclaiming:

"This is a cruel thing, Mrs. Lee, and I swear to you that if it has happened through any fault or carelessness of our men it shall be made right to you if I have to do it out of my own pocket."

"You are very kind to speak so, Colonel Allerton, but it can never be made right, it is too late."

"Painter denies all knowledge of it and I hope and believe he is telling the truth for once. He'd be a fool to rob himself of such quarters as we had here to gratify a petty feeling of resentment," Colonel Allerton said and, seeing Webster, he called out, "Webster, can you tell us anything about how the fire started?"

The negro hesitated a moment but finally, addressing his mistress, said tremblingly, "I's mortal shame to tell you, Missus, but it ketched in de kitchen. De boys wus out possum huntin' las night an' dis ev'nin' Dinah wus a cookin' de suppah fo' 'em when one de boys knocked de kerosene lamp off'n de shelf an' de flames kotch de ile an' de cu'tins an de niggahs los' dere heads an' rush out o' do's an' lef' it an' fo' I could git 'em back wid watah de flames wus all ovah de house an' we couldn't do nothin' to stop 'em. It wusn' de sojers' fault, Miss Gin-nie, I's pow'ful sorry to say it, but we has t' 'dmit dat," he added meekly.

Mrs. Lee was weeping quietly as she listened to this recital and watched the roof and side walls of her home falling piece by piece into the burning ruins. Virginia turned to Colonel Allerton and said, "This exonerates your men, Colonel Allerton, but they will have to seek

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new quarters now. You will not take the Lodge from us, will you?"

"No, by heaven, we won't!" the Colonel vowed, "and if it were to do again I'd never require Lee's Summit of you. Our men didn't set it afire, but it would not have happened if we had never come here."

When the flames died out, the commander stationed men to watch the dying embers through the night and Mrs. Lee and Virginia went back with the Hudsons to the Lodge.

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CHAPTER XV.

VIRGINIA went to bed but not to sleep. Her heart was too full of grief and bitterness for that, and the fiery vision was so ineffaceably stamped upon her memory that she could not put it from her. All night long she lay wide awake, going over the events of the disastrous hour and trying to realize what had happened. She was glad when day at last began to break and she heard Hudson and his wife in the kitchen. As soon as she ate her breakfast, she hurried up to the smoking ruins, viewing them all over, looking after the out-houses and fences in the rear and examining the trees nearest the house, some of which had been totally destroyed while others were charred and dried on the side next to the fire. She smiled bitterly as she passed one she had so lately protected from Painter's axe.

"This is about the way all our efforts have ended of late," she muttered to herself and, stepping into the summer house, she sat down to think. The wind sighed in the branches above her, the autumn leaves, yellow and red and brown, fell all about her on the grass, and the bright sun, breaking through the clouds of the night and the early morning, flooded the place with golden glory. She almost wondered how it could shine so brightly and look upon such a scene as this. Then she fell into a long meditation upon her past life in the dear home now gone forever, dwelling upon many incidents of her childhood and early womanhood when none but joyous experiences had yet come to her. She recalled the ambitious hopes with which the South had entered upon this contest, her own as bright as any in the land, and

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then she thought of the months and years of hardship and self-sacrifice that had been rewarded only by a long line of discouragements and disappointments.

"And this is my reward! This is the end of it all!" she exclaimed in a bitter tone as she threw her arms across a little table and dropped her head dejectedly upon them.

Her attitude of utter helplessness and hopelessness appealed strongly to the sympathetic nature of Philip Blair who, a moment after, stepped up to the door, guided thither by the sound of her voice.

"Virginia—Miss Lee," he said, holding out his hands to her as he would toward a little child.

The young girl bounded up with a glad cry and, putting both her hands in his, said impulsively:

"O, Lieutenant Blair, I thought you were never coming."

A vivid blush spread over her face as she realized what she had said and done and, quickly withdrawing her hands, she hid her face in them and burst into tears. They were the first she had shed and, for a time she made no attempt to restrain them but, recovering herself ere long, she said as if in apology:

"Pardon my weakness, please. This has been such a shock to me and I have endured such a nervous strain that I am not myself this morning. I hope you will not see me like this again."

"Do not say so, dear Miss Lee," Philip answered earnestly. "I am only too thankful to be here at this time when, if ever, you need my sincerest sympathy. How did it all happen, my little friend—you said I might call you so, you remember?"

"It is a long time since," Virginia replied.

"Yes, a long time since," he repeated, "but I hope

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I have not forfeited my right. It was through no fault of my own that I did not come sooner. But how did this happen, anyway? Was the house set on fire by the soldiers quartered there?" he asked anxiously.

Virginia gave the account of the accident as she had heard it from Webster.

"I am glad to know our men were not even the accidental cause of the disaster," Philip said, smiling at her across the little table. "I feared it would only strengthen your animosity toward *Federal soldiers*."

"On the contrary, I think I am measurably softened toward them," was the reply. "Colonel Allerton has shown himself such a just man that I have recently extended the bounds of my toleration."

"Has he treated you kindly?" Philip asked eagerly. "I am grateful to him if he has shown you courtesy and respect."

Virginia then related many incidents that had occurred during Philip's absence, and, among them, she told of Painter's attempt to cut down the trees. She was laughing heartily before she finished the tale at the recollection of her own triumph and of Painter's chagrin and ignominious downfall, and her companion was laughing with her, more from pleasure at her improved spirits than from merriment over the scene described, which he thought rather painful than otherwise. Holding out her hands, Virginia showed him the scars where the bark had torn them and, covering them with his own great strong palm, he said kindly:

"Poor little hands! They were never intended for such hardships. How I wish I could bear part of the burden for you. My shoulders are broad enough you see," he added as he drew himself up to his full height, which was rather in excess of the ideal of manlyauty.

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There was a seriousness to their conversation that frightened Virginia and she answered jestingly. "That all sounds well, Lieutenant Blair, and yet you are ready to fight against my side any day."

"Of course," he replied in a responsive tone. "You see, I want to keep under the same flag with you."

"O, that puts your conduct in a new light and I suppose I must forgive you," she said, laughing.

"Besides, you would not have me to desert a cause I believe to be right even for your sake, would you?" he asked more seriously.

"By no means," was the quick response. "I want no man to modify his principles for my sake." The question had touched a sensitive point and Virginia's heart gave ready answer.

"That's a brave and noble little woman," Blair said approvingly, "and just the sort to make a good patriot when once you get on the right side."

"You at least punctuate 'right side' with a question mark, I hope," Virginia said interrogatively.

"As you please about that," he assented. "I am not here to-day to argue with you but to sympathize. And now I want to tell you why I have not been here before. Did you expect me? Were you disappointed?" he asked.

"Why, yes, I expected you at first," she answered hesitatingly, ignoring the last question. "You know you said you would come."

"Were you disappointed?" he repeated.

After a moment's pause Virginia answered frankly, "Yes, a little. Habit is a strong factor in all our actions, you know, Lieutenant Blair, and I have developed such a habit of arguing with you a part of each day that the change annoyed me a little."

Blair smiled with gratification as he answered, "If I

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had supposed you would give me a second thought I might—but no, I could not have come sooner even if I had received stronger encouragement than the offer of ‘Old Dominion hospitality’.”

Virginia smiled, too, as she saw that he remembered her words at parting, while he continued his explanation.

“The truth is, everything has been on the move since the arrival of the new general. He’s a power, Miss Lee, and we shall soon see an end of this waiting.”

“You mean General Grant, of course? Do you think he will win?” Virginia asked.

“Yes, I mean General Grant, and I think he will win,” Blair answered with a good-natured smile, “but we can talk of that also at another time. I was sent immediately after I left here on an expedition into northern Georgia, from which we returned only yesterday. Even now we are stationed ten miles from here and this morning, my very first opportunity to spend a part of a day at my own pleasure, I have come that distance to enjoy ‘Old Dominion hospitality’.”

At this juncture Jake’s shining black face peered in at the door and Jake’s saucy voice called out, “La, sakes! Miss Ginnie, I’s done looked de whole place ober fo’ you. Missus done got oneasy an’ thought somethin’ had happened.”

“Didn’t she know Lieutenant Blair was here?” Virginia asked in surprise.

“Dunno, Miss. All I know is she sent me t’ hunt you,” the darky replied while Philip hastened to say:

“No, Miss Lee, I didn’t stop at the Lodge. I saw Sam at the gate and he told me you had gone up to the fire and I came directly here.”

“Tell mother where I am, Jake, and that I will be

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down presently, and you might tell Mrs. Hudson, too, that Lieutenant Blair will be with us for dinner."

"For dinner!" Lieutenant Blair exclaimed in dismay, looking hastily at his watch. "After eleven o'clock! I had not thought of its being so late. Would you have believed that we have been sitting here for almost two hours? I must be gone at once."

"Surely you will not start before dinner on a long ride like that," Virginia remonstrated.

"Yes, I must do it," was the reply. "I have duties at the camp this afternoon and I must not neglect them."

"But where will you get your dinner?"

"O, somewhere on the way, wherever I happen to be at dinner time. You know we do not ride far now without coming upon a Federal camp, Miss Lee."

In passing, Philip looked in at the Lodge for a word with Mrs. Lee. Mrs. Hudson, too, came in to greet him and to invite him to remain for dinner, which he again declined to do.

"An' how is Tom Healy? Did he get well?" she asked.

"He is almost well now, Mrs. Hudson," Blair replied, "but his improvement was much less rapid after he went to the camp. They try to take good care of the sick and wounded there but it is far from such attention as Tom received here. He joined his old company only yesterday after our return from Georgia. Turning to Virginia, he said, 'Please tell them after I am gone, Miss Lee, why I have not been here before. I fear you must all have thought me negligent and ungrateful to stay away so long, after your kindness to me.'"

"I wondered a little that we heard nothing from you but Mrs. Hudson insisted that you had been unavoidably delayed," Mrs. Lee replied.

"Thank you, Mrs. Hudson, for defending me in my

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absence," said Philip. "I should certainly have returned sooner had it been possible for me to do so." With this he said good-bye and left the house. Virginia accompanied him to the gate where Sam had tied his horse after feeding and watering it.

"I shall not be away so long this time," he called back as he rode away, and Virginia marveled at the lightness of her heart as she walked toward the Lodge. She looked forward almost with pleasure to tasks which, in the morning, seemed impossible. Sitting in the summer house all alone, she had seriously contemplated disbanding the negroes and going at once to Atlanta. The struggle to keep the plantation running seemed too great to be kept up longer. Now, however, the whole face of things was changed. An hour or two in the genial influence of Philip's presence had given her encouragement and inspiration to "do with her might what her hand found to do," and in the afternoon she and Hudson set the negroes to work, some, as usual, in the fields, others, restoring order, as far as might be, in the vicinity of the great house.

For a time Virginia was too busy to think much about her present state of mind but gradually as she had leisure for reflection she again began to question whether, after all, her relations with Lieutenant Blair were perfectly consistent with the promise she had made to Hugh in all sincerity and meant to keep. Was she not allowing herself, she asked, to develop a stronger interest in this new friend than an engaged woman should feel for any man other than her lover? Her lover! Yes, that was Hugh's relation to her and she must keep that fact steadily in mind. Yet how absurd, she argued again, that she should raise such a question even in her own mind regarding a man of whom she knew so little. Hugh, who

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was certainly the person to be considered first, would laugh at such folly. No woman should be deprived of association with young men simply because she was engaged to be married. Hugh himself would say as much. At Richmond, was he not constantly thrown with the most beautiful and accomplished women in the Confederacy, and she had never even thought of questioning his right to the privilege. She had settled the matter in Philip's favor when she found herself recalling the incidents of the visit in the summer house that morning and the genuine happiness she had felt in his presence. No, it would not do. "General association" with the opposite sex was all right but an individual interest such as this was becoming, was certainly dangerous. She would not forbid Lieutenant Blair's visits but henceforth she would receive him at the Lodge in her mother's presence.

She adhered to this determination and twice when Philip came she entertained him in the sitting-room or on the porch of the cottage, her mother usually sitting near with sewing or embroidery to occupy the time. Philip was too genial and well-bred to display annoyance at this circumstance, if, indeed, he felt any, and the hours were spent in the most pleasant and enjoyable conversation. Mrs. Lee told them many things concerning her early life in Virginia, her marriage and her introduction to Tennessee life in this same cottage which had become her home once more. They wandered then to the new house on the hill and to Virginia's childhood and, finally, Philip was induced to talk of himself and his own home in the North, of his mother and sister who, he said, would be glad to know he had found such friends as themselves in the South. Virginia was thoroughly democratic in political principle but she was also thoroughly thankful that she was descended from the very best blood in the

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country and it pleased her to draw from Philip's account of his home life the conclusion that he, also, was an aristocrat by birth.

One morning a week or more after his return, he came to the Lodge rather earlier than usual and asked Virginia to go with him to the summer house for a farewell visit, saying it might be a long while before he would see it again.

"Why?" she asked anxiously. "You are not going away, are you?"

"Yes, I am going away for the present," he replied, watching her face closely as he spoke. "We have been ordered to a position south of Lookout Mountain and we shall be moving early to-morrow morning. I'll be too far away and too busy to come for a while and there will be serious work on hand during that while."

"You mean there will be a battle?" she asked, her horror apparent in her eyes.

"Yes, I think there will," he replied gravely. She walked quietly by his side for a little way before she said sadly, "Once I thought I had the spirit of a good soldier but since the days of Chickamauga I have wished that no friend of mine—or anyone else, as to that—ever had to go into battle again."

"Yes, it is a serious thing, this war of ours," Philip said, "but it is the price of a nation that is well worth the sacrifice. We cannot all see it now but we will see it some day."

The tone was so kindly that Virginia, knowing how sincerely the words came from Philip's heart, did not resent them while he, bending his head to look into her face, which was turned away from him, and seeing its sorrowful expression, added cheerfully, "Here, here, little

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woman, I didn't tell you this to frighten you and you must forget it and be gay again."

Mrs. Lee followed the two to the door and stood looking after them for a moment. An unwonted look came over her face, half pleasure, half uneasiness, and fond recollections of her own early life crept into her heart. "That's more like the *real thing*," she said to herself, "but it would never do. Virginia would not break her promise and, if she did, she would not consider a Yankee for a moment."

As for Virginia, she had abandoned all restraint. The good resolution of a few days before recurred to her mind but she dismissed it and determined to indulge her inclination for this one afternoon—she owed it to Lieutenant Blair in return for his kindness to her, she reasoned. So easy it is to persuade ourselves that the course we prefer is the right one.

When Philip and Virginia came down to the Lodge that November day, life held a new charm for each of them. A magical hand had been weaving about them those toils which tear and rend the heart in the breaking, though no word of love had been spoken, nothing had passed between them that the world might not have known. Virginia yielded herself to the sweet influence of the hour, thinking in her heart that perhaps she might have loved like other girls, had the opportunity come earlier in life and in a different guise—now it was too late. She would enjoy the pretty dream for this one day because it was Philip's last and to-morrow—— But she would leave to-morrow to take care of itself. It would be easier to consider the other side of the question when Lieutenant Blair was far away. Something like this frequently formed an undercurrent to her thoughts but she cast it aside and devoted herself to her guest, even going with him to the

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gate when he left and permitting her hand to rest in his much longer than was necessary at parting, while he assured her of his power and his willingness to be of service to them after the battle, which he confidently expected soon.

During the remainder of the day Virginia allowed herself to dream of this new and peculiar happiness. Tomorrow she would regulate her conduct *on principle* once more.

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CHAPTER XVI.

BUT what matters the love or hatred of an individual at a time like that of which we write? As compared with a nation's success or failure, a nation's triumph or humiliation, what is the joy or sorrow of a single heart? Nearly two thousand hearts lay pulseless on the slopes of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge when the battles were ended, yet who stopped to think that each had known its own happiness, its own bitterness, that here had been enacted almost two thousand times that last awful tragedy which the bravest of us await with shrinking spirit? It was the last of those three great Union victories which set the joy bells ringing in the North, and the death-knell clanging all over the Confederacy and it was accomplished with the marvellous expedition that characterized the movements of the greatest of the Federal generals. From the very day of his coming it had been evident that a new hand was directing the campaign and a close study of the plans shows them to be so brilliant, yet so simple and perfect, that we are won to admiration of the man who could conceive them.

The initial attack, made by General Hooker with his conglomerate forces drawn from the four quarters of the loyal states, was splendid. Scaling heights apparently inaccessible, carrying fortifications apparently impregnable, the attacking lines advanced under cover of the clouds which, throughout the morning, hung about the summit of the mountain, hiding their movements from the enemy above. A few hours of desperate fighting found the Federal forces far up the sides of the mountain almost completely surrounding it and shutting off

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communication between the garrison at the top and the Confederate troops in the valley east of Lookout Mountain. During the struggle of the afternoon, the clouds descended into the valley, giving to that part of the action the name of the "Battle above the clouds," by which it is known in history. The conflict continued far into the night and the soldier fighting upon the slopes of the mountain first became aware of the successful issue of the charge when, by the rays of the rising sun, the stars and stripes were seen floating from the summit. The capture of Missionary Ridge by Sherman and his forces on the second day completed the stupendous undertaking and Bragg was compelled to withdraw his shattered army into northern Georgia in full retreat toward Atlanta. The Confederate commander had made the same mistake which Montcalm made at Quebec and many other less illustrious generals made before him, of relying too much on the strength of his position and weakening his lines of defence accordingly.

Reference is here made to this battle or series of battles, not so much as a contribution to the general result of the Civil War as for the sake of the part taken by some of the leading personages of this narrative. General Bragg's demeanor is too well known to need more than a passing comment. Surprise, consternation, despair, succeeded each other in his mind as he beheld the disastrous rout of his veterans and it was with bitter disappointment and humiliation that he relinquished his position and began his retreat southward.

Lieutenant Blair and Tom Healy were with the eastern forces that took the lead in the assault on Lookout Mountain. These forces had been for several days reconnoitering and skirmishing in the vicinity before the preparations for the final demonstration were complete and yet

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Philip had found neither time to visit Lee's Summit nor opportunity to communicate with Virginia in any way. The frequency with which his mind reverted to her and the intensity of the interest with which she inspired him were a surprise even to himself, accustomed as he was to an attitude of indifference toward womankind. But he did not stop to inquire into the nature of his regard for her or to speculate on the incongruous position in which he found himself. She had charmed him from his earliest association with her and he was free to yield himself to the influence of that charm. 'Beyond this, he gave the matter no consideration.

On the afternoon before the battle, he found a lad at a farm house who knew the locality of Lee's Summit and was willing, out of consideration for a goodly-sized coin which Philip showed him, to undertake the delivery of a note to the young lady there. Philip wrote a hurried missive and despatched it with the most urgent injunctions of haste.

Blair and Healy were in the front ranks of the impetuous charge that carried the fortifications along the crest of Point Lookout and Blair was one of the leaders in the bold dash, made contrary to orders, down the eastern slope of the ridge, a movement which nothing short of success could have excused. Even Healy's daring spirit was daunted by the rashness and abandon with which Philip threw himself into the thickest of the fight, exposing his broad shoulders to the bullets of the enemy, who quickly singled him out as an easy mark. The Irishman lost interest in the capture of the enemy's works and gave his attention to Philip, determined to shield him as long as possible and, failing in that, to rescue him when wounded. Ere long, as was inevitable, a ball went crashing through Philip's right arm, tearing it cruelly and bury-

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ing itself in his chest. But Tom was at hand and with the aid of two of his comrades, he carried the wounded man from the field amidst shouts and cheers of victory that were echoed from the mountain heights on every hand.

Philip was taken as quickly as possible to a tent and a surgeon summoned immediately, so much for the advantage of a faithful friend in a soldier's hour of need. The ball was extracted, the wounds dressed, and Philip, still unconscious, was sleeping quietly, while yet other victims of the day's horrors lay in helplessness and agony where they fell. Tom at once contrived a comfortable means of transportation and took his charge to a farm house where he could have the benefit of those attentions and restoratives which money can always procure.

Several days elapsed before Philip sufficiently recovered to heed the watchers at his bedside but at last, awaking one morning after a night of quiet, refreshing slumber, he gazed about him with new appreciation of life and its possibilities.

"I have been sick a long time, haven't I, Tom?" he said to Healy, who stood at a small table across the room stirring some medicine he was preparing in a glass for the patient.

Tom gave a start of surprise as he heard the familiar sound of Philip's natural tones. Hastening to the bedside, he scrutinized the sick man closely to assure himself that he had heard aright. "Ever since the day of the battle, Mr. Philip," he answered.

"O, yes, the battle. I remember that. What happened? Was I hurt? And how long ago was it?" Philip asked eagerly.

"Yes, a bit of a scratch you got, sir, but the doctor

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says we'll be havin' you all right soon," Tom responded hopefully.

"How long has it been?" Philip insisted.

"A twelvemonth, I should say, judgin' by my feelin's, sir," was the evasive reply.

"See here, Tom, I'm not in a mood to be trifled with. How long have I lain here like this?"

"A week the day after to-morrow, an' ye will know," Tom blurted out.

"A week!" Philip exclaimed, attempting to rise but falling back on his pillow with a groan of pain. "Am I so badly hurt, Tom?" he asked helplessly.

"Yes, you are badly hurt an' a wonder it is you're here at all instead o' layin' in one o' them long trenches up on Lookout Mountain, the way you lost your head an' rushed in the very face of death that day," Tom growled.

"Did we win, Tom? I someway can't remember anything but the din and confusion," Philip said anxiously.

"Well, didn't we win!" Tom said exultantly. "The mountains round here are all bonny with stars and stripes and Federal soldiers are a swarmin' all over 'em. The rebs have all scudded away to dens and holes somewhere in Georgia."

"What a blessing if this would end it, Tom," Philip said earnestly, "but it won't, there's work ahead for us yet. How long do you expect to keep me here, Tom?"

"Long enough, I can promise you, if you don't stop askin' questions an' keep still. The doctor says if you're not kep' still you'll lose that arm yet," was the consoling reply. Healy knew Blair of old and was aware that in a matter of this kind he was not to be controlled by mild phrases.

"Which arm?" Blair asked, at the same time raising

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his left arm and endeavoring to do the same with the right one but desisting with another groan of pain.

"Why, have I been shot all to pieces, Tom?" he asked in a tone which appealed strongly to Healy's loyal heart.

"Yes, you have been almost done up, Mr. Philip, but the doctor says good nursin' an' perfect quiet is all you need now to pull you through. Speakin' o' that reminds me of a feller I knowed back in N'York state who went for the doctor when his wife's mother was sick an', not findin' 'im at his office, the man writes on the slate, 'Doctor Simons—My mother-in-law is a layin' at death's door. Can't you come down an' help pull her through?'"

Lieutenant Blair had recovered from the twinge of pain that the effort to move had given him and he smiled indulgently, as he always did at Tom's nonsense. The diversion was only momentary, for immediately he asked in rather a despondent tone:

"Did you say there is danger of losing my arm, Tom? I *must* not lose my arm."

"No, no, sir," Healy replied quickly. "I said the surgeon says if you will be quiet he thinks he can even save your arm. But if we go on like this he won't promise us nothin'. Here you've been a talkin' like mad for half an hour an' me not a shuttin' you off but helpin' the talk along. Here, take this dose an' then I'm goin' out an' leave you alone for a while till the spell's broke. If you want me you can ring the bell."

Tom administered the medicine and stalked out of the room, taking care, however, not to go far from the door lest he should fail to hear a summons from the patient.

Three or four days later, Philip lay one afternoon, quietly watching Tom as he moved about the room. "Tom," he at length said hesitatingly, "there is one thing

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I have been wanting to say to you ever since I have been able to talk."

"Faith, sir, I should say there had been several things you've wanted to say, the to do I've had to keep you from talkin'," Healy replied.

"I mean one subject that I hesitated to speak about because—well, to tell the truth, I scarcely know why myself."

"Out with it, sir. No need to be mealy-mouthed with old Tom," the Irishman insisted.

"It's about Miss Lee," Philip said.

"To be sure," Healy responded quickly. "You're pretty hard hit in that quarter, eh, Mister Philip?"

"What makes you think so, Tom?" Philip asked.

"I tell by the symptoms, sir, the symptoms," Tom answered. "I've had 'em an' it's meself that knows 'em like a book."

"You, Tom, you in love?" Philip exclaimed.

"Ay," Healy replied. "I've been that embroiled with a girl, as I once heard a fellow back in N'York state say, I could neither sit, stand nor walk, neither lie, tell the truth nor keep still."

"And are these the symptoms you claim to have noticed in me, Tom?" Philip asked in pretended dismay.

"No, they're the symptoms of an advanced case, Mister Philip. You are still in the early stages, I should judge."

"But when did you have such an experience, Tom? I could not believe it upon any evidence but your own."

"Many's the time, many's the time," Tom said with a grimace.

"Why, old fellow, it's been my understanding that true love is a thing of a lifetime," Philip argued jokingly.

"It's all a mistake, sir, all a mistake," Tom replied, rubbing his hands and shaking his head in mock solemnity.

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"I know there's them that says it's like measles or whoopin' cough an' comes but once in a lifetime but I find it more like a bad cold that settles right down on a feller whenever the conditions is right."

"And what are the conditions, Tom?" Philip asked, although the far away look in his eyes showed his thoughts to be outside the narrow confines of his room.

"A soft heart an' a han'some girl willin' to be courted," Tom said, hastening to add before Philip had time to reply, "but to return to the original topic, sir, what is it about Miss Lee? She's a stunner, she is, an' I don't wonder you stopped to give her a second glance."

"I want to send a message to her and I don't just know how to do it," Blair explained. "I can't write with my arm in this fix and I don't know where a carrier is to be found if I could."

"No, you can't write now that's plain enough," Tom answered slowly, setting his wits to work.

"Do you think you could find your way back to Lee's Summit, old boy?" the Lieutenant asked with some hesitation.

"Sure I could," Healy declared, brightening at the suggestion.

"And would you be willing to go to Miss Lee and tell her of my condition and that I will see her within a fortnight?"

"Not so fast, Mister Philip, not so fast. You can't leave this place in a fortnight," Tom answered. "Don't suppose I pulled you out o' that mess on Lookout Mountain only to let you kill yourself in the end by hurryin' out before you're ready."

"Well, as soon as I am able to get there, then, you may tell her. Can you do it, Tom, and will you?" Philip asked eagerly.

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“If you think you can get along without me for so long, sir, ’twill be a matter o’ two days, at least, sir,” was the reply.

“Yes, yes, I’ll be all right. I’m almost well and these people are attentive and kind. Be sure you tell her that I am gaining rapidly, Tom. Will you go at once?” Philip hurried through his sentences as if anxious, now the thing was settled, to see Tom on his way.

“Indeed I will not,” Tom answered decidedly. “The afternoon is half gone now. I’ll stay with you to-night and to-morrow morning, if you are no worse, I’ll take an early start an’ by doin’ so I can get back the second day, mebby, an’ only be away from you for one night. The message won’t spoil an’ neither will the girl in so short a time.”

“It seems to me you are getting a trifle high-handed, Healy,” Blair remonstrated. “I never knew you to be so before.”

“Ah! but the tables is turned, sir. I am the master an’ you the man for the present.” Then taking Philip’s left hand, he rubbed it between his own as he continued, “You must take good care o’ yourself an’ get out of this before long an’ you’ll see old Tom fallin’ back into his rightful place easy enough.

“I was but jesting, Tom,” Philip said, seeing that Tom had fallen into a serious mood. “Hereafter you can have but one place with reference to me and that is among my most valued friends.”

Tom gave Philip’s hand a warm pressure as he laid it down very gently. “I’ll be off before you are awake in the mornin’ an’ I’ll do my best for you with the han’some little rebel.”

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CHAPTER XVII.

DURING the first days of Philip's absence, Virginia succeeded in rising to a high plane of principle and honor. Making no attempt to hide from herself the sentiment growing in her heart, she resolutely determined to crush it before it was too late.

On the very first morning she wrote to Hugh whom she had been sadly neglecting. The letter was longer than usual and more effusive and demonstrative, exemplifying Bacon's declaration that "love, when it sickeneth, useth an enforced ceremony," going beyond the genuine promptings of the heart in those courtesies and attentions born of real affection.

She gave herself no time for the softer musings by which the feminine disposition is inclined to foster the tender passion, but plunged into work with a zeal akin to desperation, hoping to weary both mind and body and thus preclude the possibility of those day-dreams and night meditations that so often prove themselves the undoing of our good resolutions.

The work of removing the debris of the fire was in progress and Virginia took Sam and Sallie and two or three of the smaller negroes and began the fall renovation of the lawn. This meant trimming the vines, pruning the shrubbery, and raking up the dead leaves which formed a dense bed from the top of the hill to the stone wall at the base. It was a yearly custom but one in which Virginia had never before taken an active part. She answered her mother's remonstrances by saying she needed the exercise in the open air and wished to have the lawn in good shape should they find it possible to rebuild

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in the spring. Mrs. Lee, silenced but not convinced, replied:

"O, do it if you wish, it can do no harm if you are careful not to take cold, but from the present indications I should say that nothing is more unlikely than that we can rebuild in the spring.

The "indications" referred to were the marching and remarching of the Union forces in all directions which had for days been agitating the minds of Confederate sympathizers in the vicinity. Small bands, companies, whole armies of blue-clad soldiers were to be seen every day. It was evident that an important event was near at hand, and to the mind of the ordinary citizen, unaccustomed to military movements, there seemed an innumerable throng of the dreaded Yankees. It was difficult to believe that General Bragg, who was miles away from them and who had never made a demonstration in full force in the immediate neighborhood of Lee's Summit, could have an army in any way commensurate with these swarms of men to oppose to their assaults on his mountain strongholds, which was generally understood to be the next movement to expect.

But Virginia was not to be deterred from her purpose of working incessantly as a safeguard against the temptation that threatened her. In order to obtain the best results from the negroes as well as to trick herself into the belief that she was really enjoying the work, she made such a play and frolic of it that Jake declared, "'twas as good as a picnic, he spected," asking Sallie on the side if she had ever been to a "sho 'nuf picnic."

"Co's I has," returned Sallie, scornfully. "Me an' Jerry's done went with Miss Ginnie an' Cap'n Cunnam many a time. Co's I's ben to picnics, chile."

"Bettah make de mos' of it, Sallie," Jake replied, in a

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tantalizing tone. "Jerry'll fergit all 'bout you 'fo' he gits back t' Ten'see agin."

"Don' you b'lieve dat, niggah. Jerry no mo' fergit me 'n Cap'n Cunnam 'll fergit Miss Ginnie, which ain' no ways likely, I *should* say," Sallie said, laughing immoderately at what she considered a great joke.

Indeed, next to Jerry, "Cap'n Cunnam" was Sallie's ideal, and she had looked askance whenever she saw her young mistress walking under the trees or sitting talking with the Yankee officer. Lieutenant Blair might be well enough in his way, but he was not to be spoken of in the same day with Marse Hugh with his "han'some clo's an' fine mannahts," she declared in secret to Sam, quoting, of course, in great part, phrases she had learned from Jerry.

The labors on the lawn were rudely arrested late one afternoon by the advent of several hundred Union soldiers, whose commander, attracted by the same natural advantages that had appealed to General Bragg, selected the fields and pastures of Lee's Summit as a desirable resting place for the night. This time, however, the owners were not consulted as on the former occasion, but, wilfully throwing open the fences, the officers took possession without even a show of deference to anyone. Virginia was highly incensed by this procedure, comparing it most unfavorably with General Bragg's gentlemanly conduct. Nor was her ire in any way mitigated when she saw their granaries emptied, their horses appropriated, and their cattle driven away, leaving the plantation a broad expanse of desolation save for the faithful slaves and the little family at the Lodge, for whom there was nothing left of the ample stores that had been provided for the approaching winter. Virginia recalled Hugh's exaggerated ideas about the rights of armies, and even her father's conservative words of

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warning as to what she might expect; but they did not cover such wholesale plundering as had fallen to the lot of Lee's Summit, and she found it impossible to stretch her ideas of justice and honor to compass an experience like this. When at last a certain Captain was discovered in the act of trying to entice good old Webster from fealty to his master, and to induce him to go as body-servant to himself and some of the higher officers, she relinquished all control of her temper and declared the Yankees, one and all, to be a set of selfish, unprincipled tyrants.

"You will except Colonel Allerton and Lieutenant Blair, I presume?" remarked her mother, whom nothing short of personal danger could ruffle. "I will except no one," she retorted, emphatically, and for a moment she deceived even herself so far as to believe she spoke the truth. "These men care no more for Webster and his freedom than for the horses they ride, and when once his usefulness to them was at an end, what difference would it make to them if he starved or froze to death?"

"None, perhaps," Mrs. Lee returned, indifferently, "but they didn't get Webster, Virginia, and there's no use to vex yourself unnecessarily, it seems to me. We'd better set ourselves to thinking what we are to do. I'm sure, for my part, I think the time has arrived when we can stay here no longer. Do you suppose we could get to Atlanta now?"

"Not yet, mother, not yet," Virginia answered, quickly. "Now that we have endured this so long, let us hold on to the end, which seems just at hand. It wouldn't do to desert the blacks now when everything on the place has been stolen. We must stay here and look after them for the sake of their loyalty to us."

"We could make a provision for their support during

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the winter, as your father spoke of doing," Mrs. Lee argued.

"Yes, we *could*," Virginia admitted, reluctantly, "but let us wait a little longer, mother." The young girl was sincere in her anxiety for the slaves, but, deep in her heart, there was another "not yet, not yet," that was a still stronger admonition than this.

She returned to her work on the lawn as soon as the soldiers were gone, and was still thus engaged when the farmer lad arrived with Philip's note. The messenger, who inquired for the young lady at the Lodge, was sent in search of her with Jake as guide. He handed her the missive without a word of explanation and stood at a respectful distance while she read.

"My dear friend:

The action of which I told you is at hand. I want you to know it, and yet I scarcely see why, when I dare not even ask you to pray for our success. I have confidence enough in your generosity, however, to believe you will at least wish for my personal safety.

Yours,

Blair."

The paper trembled in Virginia's hand as she read. A sudden revulsion of feeling swept over her, and, for a time, fond recollections of the writer and anxious fears for his safety almost overwhelmed her. Controlling her agitation, she turned to the boy who seemed to expect her to say something. "Were you to take back a reply?" she asked.

"No, Miss," was the answer, "he said he would be gone when I got back."

"Will you stay here and eat your dinner?" Virginia asked mechanically. In those days the veriest stranger

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did not leave a southern home without an invitation to remain for at least one meal.

"No, Miss," the boy again said, evidently having only waited for his dismissal. "I must be going back at once. Good-morning to you."

Virginia wished the boy good morning and stood looking after him absently, as he walked away. Then, turning to the negroes, she assigned them some trivial duties and left them at their work while she started up the hill with the intention of going to the summer-house where she could be alone. Pausing about halfway there, she hesitated a few moments, and then, thrusting the paper into her bosom, returned to her work and began where she had left off when the lad came. The very fact of her present emotion was an additional evidence to her that she had a hard lesson to learn and could not afford to neglect it for an hour.

The spell, however, was broken, and she worked with a listlessness and indifference she could not overcome. This speedily communicated itself to the negroes, who, losing interest, became slovenly and negligent, while Virginia found herself growing vexed and impatient. The first in whom a change was apparent was Jake, who, as soon as the employment lost its picnicking character, began to handle the rake in a "don't care" sort of way and to watch out of the corner of his eye for an opportunity to dodge his mistress and organize a game among the woolly-headed urchins who always waited for his leadership. The unusual booming of cannon away to the southward in no way tended to relieve the gloom, and Sam and Sallie stared in wide-eyed wonder at Virginia's white, stern face. There was genuine and general rejoicing when the noon hour came and they went in to dinner. How the weary girl wished she could send the servants away and

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take a half-holiday for herself and them; but she dare not do it. An afternoon of *thinking* would be fatal. Her only safety lay in ignoring the existence of Philip Blair, and this strange, persistent fondness she had conceived for him. The hours wore slowly and painfully away, the noise of battle falling dolefully on the ear. At four o'clock, Virginia could endure the strain no longer, and, hastily dismissing Sam and Sallie—she had banished Jake and his following early in the afternoon as a nuisance and a menace to her peace of mind—she loosened the reins she had held with desperation since the early morning, and, hurrying to the summer-house, threw herself in utter abandonment upon the rustic seat and burst into a flood of tears. The relaxation was like balm to her tired spirit, and she continued to weep until nature had avenged the restraint it had suffered. Then, wiping her eyes to remove the traces of her emotion, she straightened herself up and set about looking the whole matter squarely in the face. Heretofore she had done this successfully, why not now?

First, last, always, there was the incontrovertible fact that she was engaged to Hugh. That, she must never forget or disregard for a moment. And were it not for this, she *could* not and *would* not love a Yankee. What would her father say? He had always had such confidence in her superior judgment and her steadfastness of purpose, what would he think of a caprice like this? What would Hugh say? And he had a right to say a great deal—Hugh, whom she had forced into the war by her extreme partisanship and enthusiasm. What would General Bragg say? What would all her friends say, knowing her as they did? The absurdity of her position was almost grotesque. But to oppose to it all was Philip's great manly self, and she recalled him as he stood looking

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down at her with his grave grey eyes on the morning after her home was burned, his freshly-shaven face with its strong, clear-cut features, lighting up with kindly sympathy and regard. She could see him yet, she could still feel the touch of his hand and hear his voice as he said, "Poor little hands. They were not made for such hardships." And to-day he was a conspicuous mark for the Confederate guns on yonder mountains! The thought was maddening, and, springing up, she ran down the hill almost as if fleeing from bodily torture and called to Sam to bring Beauty to her at once, forgetting, in her excitement, that there was no Beauty in the stables now. She, too, had been stolen by the Yankees. *And Philip Blair was a Yankee!* Like a dart, the offensive truth came to her again. Hurrying into the house, she sat down on a low stool and laid her aching head in her mother's lap as she used to do long ago.

"What is it, dear?" Mrs. Lee asked, gently. "Are you so nervous over the battle?"

"Oh! mother, I don't know what it is," she cried, despairingly. "All life seems such a hopeless muddle. There is no right and no wrong any more—no plan and no purpose. I don't know what to think or say or do."

Mrs. Lee stroked the girl's hair tenderly for some time before replying, feeling in her heart that she knew, at least in part, the cause of her unhappiness. At length she said, without apparently connecting her question with Virginia's mood:

"Who was the messenger lad that came to you this morning and what did he want?"

"He was a stranger to me, mother, and he brought me a note from Lieutenant Blair to tell me he was ready to go into this battle," Virginia forced herself to reply.

Mrs. Lee made no comment, but continued to stroke

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the waves of dark hair, leading her daughter to talk of indifferent topics until she was quieted and soothed and comforted. The storm had spent its fury, and no traces of it remained by the time supper was called. Early in the evening Virginia went to bed and fell quickly into a sound, sweet sleep.

She was in the same passive state of mind the next day, when the arrival of a letter from her father changed her in an extraordinary manner and stimulated her natural firmness and decision of character. The letter was to Mrs. Lee, and after the usual comments on the war and an allusion to the precarious condition of Bragg and his army, he said, incidentally, "How is it I hear so much of this Yankee—Lieutenant Blair? It must be some strong attraction that brings him so often to the Lodge. I fear it betokens no good for Virginia's promise to Hugh. Tell her, Margaret, to remember the advice of Laertes to Ophelia and 'keep in the rear of her affections.' This is probably altogether unnecessary, but it would be a matter of mortification to us all—herself included—for our Virginia to become involved in an affair of the heart with a Yankee officer. A hint to the wise is sufficient."

As Mrs. Lee finished reading this part of the letter, she glanced up at her daughter, who sat with her head bent over her embroidery and gave no sign of the thoughts that were passing in her mind. On the spur of the moment she had reached a fixed determination, she would go to Atlanta immediately and see Lieutenant Blair no more.

A few suggestions about the affairs of the plantation and a message to one or another of the leading slaves completed the letter, and at its conclusion Virginia arose quietly, and, laying aside her work, said, in a matter of fact way:

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"I'll go over to the quarters now and deliver the messages."

"There's no hurry," Mrs. Lee objected, "Hudson can do it."

"Hudson will not be at home before night," the daughter answered. "He said he meant to know the result of these battles if it took all day, and it is very evident, from the sounds we hear, that the fighting is still in progress."

Mrs. Lee had learned lately that it was useless to oppose Virginia when she took her present tone and manner with reference to some trivial action of her own, and, paying no further heed to the proposed errand, she said:

"How soon things become an old story to us. When we first began to hear these sounds of battle we could think of nothing else. Do you remember the day of Chickamauga, Virginia, how horrified we were? The roar of the cannon has become so familiar that we have barely noticed it to-day, so to speak, and yet the fighting must be nearer us and harder, if possible, than ever before."

Virginia looked curiously at her mother, wondering in her heart if she had really concealed her true state of mind as successfully as this speech would lead one to suppose; but she only answered carelessly, "War is like vice, I presume, mother—the more we see of it the less hideous it becomes to us. I hope Hudson will be able to tell us the result of all this when he returns, though, candidly, there is not much need. In my secret heart there has been a conviction of what the result would be for a long time."

Mrs. Lee asked no questions. She knew too well what that sorry tone betokened. As she sat at the window, she looked thoughtfully after Virginia's lithe young figure hurrying away toward the negro quarters, imagining there was less of spring and buoyancy in the step than

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there had formerly been. "She's a strange girl," she murmured to herself, "a strange girl, and yet I believe I know the secret of her greatest grief. How I wish I could help her."

But there was no way to help her. Perhaps the greatest kindness anyone could do her was to let her alone until *time*, the all-powerful healer of so many wounds, the great adjuster of so many difficulties, could wean her mind from the glimpse she had had of real affection and reconcile her to her lot. Hers was too proud a nature to be reached by sympathy or advice on a subject of so private nature, especially in its present aspect. Even to her mother she could not speak of an infatuation that was unreasonable and absurd, to say nothing of the fact that she had allowed it to grow upon her unsought and, possibly, unappreciated by its object. What reason had Philip Blair ever given her to believe that he thought of her save as a passing fancy and as a bit of entertainment for the present? At this point in her argument there was always a sudden uprising in her heart before which she withdrew a little from the ground she had gained by her reasoning and settled back to the only safe refuge—a sudden retreat from danger.

When Hudson returned in the evening he brought tidings of great victory for the Union army, the capture of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge and Bragg's retreat into Georgia.

"Then, mother, it is time for us to retreat, too," Virginia said eagerly, like one who seeks an opportunity to carry out a much-desired purpose.

"How can we go now? We have waited too long, we can't pass the Union lines without help and there is no one to help us," Mrs. Lee answered.

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"Colonel Allerton would help us if we could see him, he promised it weeks ago," Virginia said.

"We may never see Colonel Allerton again," her mother complained.

"Yes, I saw him in the village late this afternoon," Hudson interrupted.

"Did you, and could you find him to-morrow?" Virginia asked.

"Yes," Hudson replied, "he sent his compliments to the ladies an' said tell you he'd be in the town most of the time for a while an' he hadn't forgotten his promise."

"Oh! Joy!" Virginia cried, her face lighting up with such satisfaction as it had not shown for days, "through him we can get passes and possibly we can go soon. I wish we were ready to-night."

Mrs. Lee looked curiously at her daughter, convinced she had read the girl's heart aright and willing to do anything to make her path easier just now. They spent the evening arranging with the overseer for the support of the negroes during the winter and devising occupation for them in the absence of the family. The next day Hudson rode into town with a note from Virginia to be given to Colonel Allerton or left for him if he were not there. Finding the Colonel away, Hudson left the note and hastened back to the Lodge with the information that Bragg was not only retreating but that the Yankees were in pursuit and threatened the destruction of his forces before he could join Johnston.

Colonel Allerton came to the Lodge early the next morning. Entering the house with a jovial, good-natured greeting, he made no reference to the Confederate defeat which he naturally supposed would be a subject of humiliation to the family. "What is it I can do for you, Miss Lee?" he asked as soon as the first courtesies had been

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exchanged, "I am sorry not to have been in the village yesterday but I hope the delay has caused you no inconvenience."

"O, no, not at all," Virginia answered, "but we are ready to go to Atlanta now if we can get there. Do you think an arrangement can be made for us? You see we do not hesitate to avail ourselves of your proffered assistance."

"And right glad I am to see it," was the cordial reply. "I'm sure I can manage the passes for you. I'll see to it at once. It may require a day or two, of course—you understand there is a good deal of red tape connected with these things."

"We will be only too grateful for your assistance, Colonel Allerton, without dictating as to the time," Virginia replied.

"And what of the young Lieutenant? What will he say when he gets well and finds you gone—if he ever does get well?" the Colonel asked in a half-serious, half-jesting tone.

"Gets well! Has he been sick? Is he wounded?" Virginia exclaimed, startled out of her composure and reserve, her face turning pale with alarm rather than flushing from embarrassment.

"Hadn't you heard?" Colonel Allerton asked in surprise. "He was carried from the field half dead, it was thought, during the battle on Mount Lookout and even yet his recovery is doubtful—at least, so I have been told by men who were in the fight with him."

"Where is he now?" asked Mrs. Lee, for which Virginia was very thankful, longing to know, yet not daring to ask lest someone should discover her agitation.

"He's at a house down there somewhere and the surgeons have done all they can to fix him up. They say

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there is danger of his losing an arm but that he will probably live unless some unforeseen complications should appear," the Colonel explained calmly, while Virginia forced herself to listen with masked face that told no tale of the raging tumult in her heart. In return, she expressed some mechanical words of regret or sympathy which almost deceived even Mrs. Lee, who relieved the situation by sending Lieutenant Blair a kindly message with the wish that it were possible for her to be near him and help him.

With a few more words about the business on which he came, the Colonel took his leave, assuring them that he would return in a day or two.

When he was gone, Virginia sought the summer house, the only place where she could escape observation and the scene of so many hours of bitterness and indecision. The utmost limit of her temptation and weakness had been reached and, in her extremity, she crouched upon her knees beside the little settee and, burying her face in her hands, wept violently. She tried to pray, but the effort ended in the weak and helpless cry, "God pity me and help me." In time past this rock had been her refuge, but for weeks, now, she had been unable to frame the words of a prayer. She could not pray for the Confederacy, for inch by inch she had yielded to the conviction that it was doomed, she could not pray for Hugh, she could not pray for Philip; she could only fall upon her knees, more in helplessness than in prayerfulness, and cry out for strength to do right. And who shall say that the pitying ear of High Heaven did not hear and heed her cry? Gradually she was enabled to withdraw her mind from visions of Philip wounded and suffering, perhaps mutilated and possibly dying, and to fix it upon the duties that were at hand; to possess her spirit of the

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"peace that floweth like a river," and that often comes to us as the answer to sincere prayer.

When she returned to the Lodge her mother met her at the door with an open letter in her hand.

"There is a letter from your father," Mrs. Lee said, "and he sends us bad news from Hugh."

"What, is Hugh wounded too?" Virginia asked anxiously. "I feared it from not having heard from him for so long."

"No, not wounded," Mrs. Lee replied, "but he has been sick, has had malaria for several weeks, and two or three days ago he was well enough to go out with a reconnoitering party for the first time. They were all captured, Hugh with the rest, and they are now in the Federal prison at——"

"Poor Hugh!" Virginia said gently, "and it is all my fault, too."

"Why is it your fault?" Mrs. Lee asked in astonishment.

"Because I forced him to go. Hugh would never have been in the war but for my influence. Poor fellow!" and in her heart she made a stronger resolution than ever to go to Atlanta at once and to be true to Hugh at whatever cost. She had wronged him enough already.

A very few days sufficed for their preparations for departure. By the time Colonel Allerton returned with the necessary papers, everything was in readiness for the journey and on the very day that Philip was urging Tom Healy's visit to Lee's Summit, Mrs. Lee and Virginia turned their backs upon it, seeking, with heavy hearts, a more safe and quiet abiding place.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE possibility of finding Lee's Summit deserted had not entered Tom Healy's thoughts. To make his way there, to deliver his message and procure a reply, and to return—these, in his mind, were the successive steps of the mission before him. Hence, it was with a feeling akin to consternation that he found the Lodge closed and not a living creature in sight. Even in the direction of the negro quarters, desolation reigned, for, in Hudson's absence, nearly all the slaves, on one pretext or another, were away from the cabins. A silence that could be felt penetrated everything about him. There was no din of battle, no passing of soldiers, not even the rustle of a falling leaf or the twitter of a belated bird. Like the hush that succeeds the raging tempest was the calm that had followed in the wake of those terrible, tumultuous days.

Tom's quick eye for neatness and order readily took notice of the promptness with which the place had been cleared and set right after the fire and with genuine Yankee love of thrift he said, as he whittled a stick he had picked up at Hudson's wood-pile and glanced about from a high point of observation back of the ruins:

"They deserved better than this. It *is* a pity, an' there's lots of 'em down in these parts in the same fix— But then," he added a moment later, "it'll teach them an' the rest of the world, too, that they can't bulldoze Uncle Sam," and Tom gave a low, joyful whistle as he thought of the sweeping victory Uncle Sam had won out on those distant mountains. He was too thoroughly in sympathy

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with the Union to dwell long upon the calamities of its enemies.

As he stood musing over the great change that had been made since he left Lee's Summit and wondering mechanically what he could do next, he became suddenly aware of the approach of a young negro from the direction of the barns. He could almost believe the newcomer had sprung from the ground, so certain he had felt that there was no sign of habitation anywhere. But, being singularly free from superstition, he accosted the darky in his characteristic manner.

"Sambo," he said—all coons looked alike to Tom and he always addressed them by the same name—"where've the folks gone?"

"Missus an' Miss Ginnie's done gone to Atlanty," Sam answered bluntly.

"To Atlanty!" Tom exclaimed. "Are you sure?"

"Co's I's sho. Didn' I take 'em to de village myself to kotch de train?" Sam returned, ready to argue the question if necessary.

"Have they gone to stay?" Tom asked.

"Dunno nothin' 'bout dat, Mas'r," was the reply. "All I knows fo' sartin is deys gone t' Atlanty, an' dat I's sho of."

"Did the Hudsons go too?" Tom persisted.

"No."

"Where are they?"

"Gone to de village."

"To stay?"

"No, dey'll be back 'bout da'k, Marse Hudson say."

"I can't wait. I'll have to ride on to the village myself. Here, you, can't you feed and water my horse?" Tom called after Sam, who had turned to go back to the barn, at the same time tossing him a piece of silver that fell

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into the grass at his feet. Sam's face beamed with a pleased grin as he went down on his knees in search of the coin. When he had found it, he answered with all the respect that a gift of money inspires in his race:

"I kin watah 'im suh, an' I kin let 'im eat grass on de lawn or in de pastah, but dere's not an eah ob co'n on de place to give 'im. De Yanks done come two weeks ago an' hauled off all dey could lay hans on."

"Now, look here, Sambo, if your soul's not blacker than your skin, you won't tell me such a monstrous one as that," Tom replied. "You know that somewhere on this place you've corn enough to feed my horse."

'Deed, Mas'r, I's tellin' de truf. Hope t'die dis minit ef it ain't jes 's I say. Ye can go to de ba'n an' co'n cribs an' see fo' yo'sef."

"Well, give the horse water and grass, then, it will do until I get to the village," Tom directed and Sam hurried away to execute the command.

Tom was puzzled. He felt intuitively that the situation looked discouraging for the Lieutenant's prospects with Virginia. The report, he knew, would be hard upon Philip. He must find the Hudsons and ascertain whether or not she had left a message.

"'Twould be too bad," he argued, "for Mister Philip to leave so many nice girls a sighin' after him back in N'York state an' then come down here to be jilted by a rebel, though she is a han'some one."

After eating his dinner in Chattanooga, Tom set out in search of the Hudsons, following the directions Sam had given him, but, having found them, he gained no information from them except that the Lees would remain away indefinitely and that they had obtained their passes through Colonel Allerton. It was evident there had been no message left for Philip, although the news of his

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misfortune had been carried to the Lodge before Mrs. Lee and Virginia left there. Healy would have considered his trip worse than a failure, had he not fallen in with a party of Union soldiers from whom he heard many bits of gossip concerning the battles and acquaintances of his who had been engaged in them.

Tom had ample time for reflection during the homeward journey. "It's goin' to strike 'im all of a heap for a while," he said aloud. "It's plain to be seen he's a dotin' on her all the time an' this'll sort o' break into 'is calc'lations some, I reckon. Blast my buttons, if I know what I'm goin' t' tell 'im."

Philip was worse when Tom reached him—"had worked hisself into a ragin' fever," the Irishman said, "a worryin' over nothin'."

"Is it nothing that you have been gone almost twice as long as we expected?" Blair asked petulantly. "How was I to know you had not been captured or wounded, as you were once before?"

"Never you fear, Mister Philip. They got me once but they won't do it again. I cut my eye teeth over at Lee's Summit an' I'm too swift for 'em any more," Tom said boastingly, in reality glad of some reason to prolong the conversation and put off the dreaded explanation for which he had been able to devise no satisfactory form.

Blair had, indeed, fretted and fumed unnecessarily over Healy's prolonged stay, as strong men are inclined to do over even trivial annoyances when deprived of their usual powers of activity. Now, he saw in the delay evidence of Tom's own misfortune and again he connected it with Virginia in some unaccountable way, contriving in his imagination a score of evils that might have befallen her, yet signally failing to think of the right cause. That she might have left Tennessee, and left it, too, without a

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word to himself either of sympathy or of warning, was too unexpected even to be thought of.

He lay with an air of impatient expectancy while Tom removed his hat and coat, brushed the dust of travel from his clothing, and carefully rearranged part of the furniture in the room, complaining the while because women folks are not content to leave things where they find them. Philip's scanty stock of patience was at length exhausted and he blurted out indignantly:

"What do you suppose I sent you to Lee's Summit for, Tom, if not to hear some tidings from the people there?"

"To be sure!" Tom returned as if suddenly recalling himself to a forgotten subject. "I was so upset with findin' you like this, I was about to forget what I went for. The truth is, Mister Philip——," he began.

"Well?" Philip questioned.

"The Lees wasn't at home," Tom said helplessly.

"Where were they?"

"Gone t'Atlanty, sir," Tom answered.

"Gone to Atlanta," Philip repeated, trying to realize what the words meant. "Surely there is some message for me. Did you bring me a note from the young lady? Speak out, why can't you, and tell me whatever you have to tell?" Blair said impatiently.

"There's nothing to tell, Mister Philip," Tom admitted reluctantly. "Three or four days ago Mrs. Lee and the little rebel went to Atlanty to stay 'til it is safe or of any use to come back. I saw the Hudsons in Chattanooga and they told me this and there was no word left for anyone."

"Had they heard of my condition, do you know, Tom? The Lees, I mean?"

It was the question Tom dreaded most of all to hear.

"Yes, sir, I think they had," he was forced to admit.

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"Think! Don't you know whether they had or not? Did you say nothing to the Hudsons about me? It seems to me I am having a hard time to get at the truth."

"Yes," Tom began, bracing himself for a clean breast of the affair at once, "I talked to the Hudsons about you and they had heard of your gettin' shot at Lookout. I don't certainly know that the Lees heard of it too, but I should say they did, as the news got to the Lodge before they left."

"Who told them of it?" Blair asked.

"Colonel Allerton, sir," Tom replied, "and it seems 'twas him that got 'em the passes so they could go away."

"Thank you, Tom, that's all just now. You did all you could, I have no doubt." Philip turned wearily on his pillow and lay quiet a long while, going over in his mind the circumstances of his association with Virginia, trying to settle the nature of his relationship to her and wondering why she had treated him so. Since the day he had rescued her from Painter's persecution on her way home from the Confederate camp, she had shown no animosity toward him as a Federal soldier and sometimes he had felt almost certain she reciprocated, in a measure, the interest he felt in her. What freak had impelled her to ignore him now when he had a right to expect at least a demonstration of friendly sympathy? Was she so absurdly prejudiced? Was she simply a heartless coquette? He could not believe it, she was too honest and sincere in all her words and actions for that. He would not entertain an evil thought concerning her without actual proof of its justice.

He did not speak her name again and, as days and weeks went by, Tom began to think the episode with the heiress of Lee's Summit was of no consequence after all. At times he was on the point of congratulating

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Philip upon the ease with which he had dismissed an unpleasant entanglement, but Philip was too reserved and taciturn about everything connected with Miss Lee for even Healy to venture upon such a familiarity.

It was midwinter before Blair was able to leave the house and, as soon as he was strong enough to ride, he made his way by easy stages to Chattanooga and thence to Lee's Summit, where he was kindly received by the Hudsons and where he spent half a day wandering about and dwelling upon fond recollections of his former visits there. He obtained Virginia's address and wrote to her, bidding her direct her reply to Rochester, New York, where he expected to go in a few days to spend the remainder of the winter. No answer ever came to the letter and he was left to put whatever construction he chose upon her silence. Two or three weeks prior to this time, the part of the army to which he belonged was returned to the east and Tom Healy went with them leaving Philip to regain his strength, enjoy his vacation at home and join him in Virginia when he was ready to return to the service. Thoroughly deceived by the calmness with which Philip endured his illness and the eagerness with which he talked of his trip northward, Tom did not dream that the passing days did but increase his interest in Virginia and stimulate his desire to see her again and renew the acquaintance so rudely arrested. Many a day when he was supposed to be asleep, he had lain with his face to the wall, thinking of her and trying to devise some plan for seeing her once more. The removal of his regiment in the opposite direction from Atlanta seemed to blast his last prospect of such a meeting and he took his journey homeward in a state of hopeless uncertainty.

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CHAPTER XIX.

ATLANTA was like a new world to Virginia, coming, as she did, from the very midst of the horrors of war, from three years experience of hardship, responsibility and anxiety, from a ruined home and a devastated country. There had never been a gayer season in the gay little city than the one just beginning when she and her mother came to it seeking refuge and rest. From the day of her arrival at the home of the Chesters, she entered upon such a succession of pleasures as she had never known before. Life at Lee's Summit, in the very heyday of its prosperity, seemed tame in comparison with the bedizzening merry-go-round of calls and visits and parties and balls.

Standing in the heart of the Confederacy, shielded from the approach of the enemy by two lines of armies under popular and trusted generals, teeming with foundries, factories, mills and warehouses, the granary of the southern states, the chief depot of supplies for the southern armies, Atlanta had steadily advanced in prosperity instead of losing ground, as many of her sister cities had done. Luxurious and elegant homes, thrown open in true southern hospitality, were the centers of attraction for the pleasure-loving throng, of whom Kittie Chester, in the bloom of youth and beauty, was a distinguished leader. They had known nothing here of the real hardships of war, and such was their belief in the security of their position and the final triumph of the cause of secession that almost without interruption they continued their pursuit of wealth or ease or pleasure. No one paused to think of danger or, if the thought were forced upon them

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by some glaring defeat, as when Bragg was driven out of Tennessee, they gave the disaster a moment's consideration and then returned to "their mirth or their employment," in the spirit, if not in the language, of the kings and lords of other days—"after us the deluge."

Virginia Lee was secretly gratified by the unexpected conditions that surrounded her. She was naturally fond of society and she had looked forward with dread to the life of inactivity she expected to live in her uncle's house. Hence, easily laying aside her former prejudice against social enjoyment, which had weakened with the decline of her enthusiasm and hopefulness concerning the issue of the rebellion, she entered heartily into Kittie's plans for her entertainment. She even permitted herself the extravagance of replenishing her wardrobe to suit the necessities of the season, for the practice of those sacrifices and self-denials which Hugh was disposed to term "small economies" had not penetrated as far as Atlanta, and she found a renewed pleasure in the indulgence of her old-time taste in the matter of gowns and bonnets. The spirit of defiance and abandonment was in the air and, like the friends with whom she associated, she soon learned to shut her eyes to the evil which, wound about them like a fatal coil, was slowly but surely contracting its boundaries and threatening them with destruction. Occasionally a vivid recollection of the loss of Chattanooga aroused her to a realizing sense of their position and she warned Kittie and Mrs. Chester of the fate awaiting them, but Mrs. Chester, with whom the possession of "nerves" had become an incurable disease, begged Virginia not to force these harassing fears upon her in her frail condition, while Kittie only tossed her head good-humoredly, saying:

"Well, cousin, there'll be time enough to think of disas-

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ter when it comes. It could do no good to be sighing over it beforehand. We may as well enjoy life while we can."

"'Let us eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow we die,'" Virginia quoted ironically.

"But papa doesn't seem inclined to look at things so very seriously," Kittie argued conclusively.

"Because, up to the present time, your father's interests have been advanced by the war. His business has been more prosperous than ever and he himself has been fortunate enough to win more or less renown in the army without any grave amount of danger. Let the Union forces make their way to Atlanta and reverse all this and your views and your father's will be different."

"To be sure," Kittie replied, adding playfully, "but until 'all this' is reversed, my present state of mind is more comfortable and it is vastly more to my taste to be planning our dresses for the Dupont ball. Please, Virginia, let's drop the war subject and turn our attention to the more immediate, if not the more important, one. We must place our orders with Madame Verne by to-morrow or she will not be able to fill them."

And thus the wilful little lady dismissed all serious contemplation of future evil and, gradually, her graver cousin fell in with her care-free ways.

On the evening of the Dupont ball, supposed to be the chief event of the holidays, Kittie suddenly appeared in Virginia's room arrayed in the cloud of ruffles and puffs and laces which was the result of her "planning" with Madame Verne.

"How beautiful!" Virginia exclaimed as she looked at her cousin.

"Do you like it?" Kittie asked eagerly. "I am so

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glad. Do you know, my dear, there is nobody's approval quite so agreeable to me as yours?"

"Like it! It is lovely!" Virginia returned. "You are even more beautiful, Kittie, than you gave promise of being when you were younger, and I always thought you pretty. And you have just the kind of beauty to suit your name, with your soft voice and gentle manners."

"Don't say that!" Kittie said, laughing and laying her hand over Virginia's mouth. "That's just what I don't want to be. I'd rather be tall and grand like you are. You've been my ideal since we were little girls and yet I can't grow one bit like you."

"Tut! tut! child. Look into the glass and see what nonsense you are talking."

Kittie raised her eyes and looked first at the reflection of Virginia's face and then at her own with its large brown eyes, round, rosy cheeks and long, soft curls.

"Yes," she said after a moment's pause, "it is what might be called a prettier face than yours but I'd give all the world to look like you and be like you."

"Fie! little one. Why, all the beaux in Atlanta are dancing attendance upon you, what more could you ask?"

"But it makes so much ado about nothing, Virginia. It would be so much nicer to have one's affairs all arranged beforehand as yours were and save all the trouble and worry. I suppose Hugh Cunningham is as fond of you as ever?"

It was the first time her personal relations with Hugh had been spoken of since her coming and it aroused a strange sensation in Virginia's heart. Remembering Kittie's former fondness for Hugh, she glanced at her quickly, as the question was asked, but experience had taught the little puss many a lesson in self-control and

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her face gave no sign of emotion as she carefully arranged a stray curl and gave a finishing touch to the bow of ribbon on her shoulder.

"I suppose so," Virginia answered with a shade of sadness in her tone. "At least his letters sound just as they always did and he professed to feel the same as ever toward me when he was at home in August."

"Are you engaged to him, dear?" Kittie asked carelessly.

"Yes, I have promised to marry him when the war is over." The answer was pronounced the least bit firmly as if intended as much for her own reassurance as for Kittie's information.

"How queer it must seem to be really engaged!" Kittie said, looking meditatively at her cousin who replied in a rather expressionless way, "How queer!"

And then the carriage was announced and they went away to a brilliant scene of festivity and mirth that gave no time to think of raging conflict or wearisome tie or unrequited love.

What of Philip Blair all this time? Had Virginia forgotten him? With all the might of her strong character she strove to dismiss him from her thoughts as completely as he had disappeared from her sight. For this purpose she welcomed the gay life into which she entered and for this she threw herself heart and soul into whatever enjoyment presented itself. If at times her mind persistently reverted to the forbidden theme she sought some fresh diversion and pursued it zealously until her will-power had conquered. An uninterrupted course of such discipline might, eventually, have accomplished the desired end, but fate and Philip's own inclination decreed it otherwise. Virginia had scarcely settled in her own heart—satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily—that this epi-

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sode in her life was irrevocably past, when the coming of Lieutenant Blair's letter re-awakened the sleeping passion and renewed the old struggle that had cost her so much bitterness at Lee's Summit.

It was a charming letter, cordial, earnest, filled with the things she wished to know. It told of the writer's long illness and convalescence, of Healy's trip to her home and of his own keen disappointment when he learned that she had left Tennessee without even a message for him; it told of his visit to Lee's Summit, describing various changes he had noticed, relating incidents connected with the Hudsons or the negroes, and revealing his inmost thoughts and feelings as he wandered among haunts which he associated with happy recollections of her; it told of Colonel Allerton's sickness and death in late December, of Healy's removal to the east and of his own projected visit in the North, ending with the regret that the trip which would otherwise be so great a pleasure must be marred by the thought that it but increased the distance between himself and her and deferred the day when he should meet her again. "And we *shall* meet again," he said in conclusion. "It is simply unthinkable to me that you should have come to me for a brief time to arouse in my heart an interest such as I have never felt in anyone before and then as suddenly drop out of my life never to return. It shall not be. Answer me at Rochester, New York.

Sincerely yours,

PHILIP BLAIR.

After this Virginia spent a night of passionate grief and bitter rebellion, alternating with periods of calm judgment and earnest prayer. By morning she had taken her resolve and, having completed her toilet, she stood with the precious letter in her hand ready to drop it on

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the blazing fire in her grate. But here her woman's nature rebelled utterly and as a compromise with her reason she buried the missive in the bottom of a large trunk where she would never have occasion to see it again unless she voluntarily chose to do so. It is said that "he who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city." Virginia had ruled her own spirit and she descended to the breakfast room with the heroic air of a conqueror.

A few days later she was further strengthened in her purpose of treading the thorny path of duty by a letter from Hugh which, unintentionally upon his part, was most suggestive of her obligation to him without tending to remove the thorns from the way she trod. In it, he said with reference to his prison life, "I thought I had considered all the possible calamities of a soldier's life before I enlisted, but I did not reckon upon this. I had reconciled myself to privation, sickness, danger, and even death if it should come to me, but the idea of being captured, strangely enough, did not occur to me; and if it had, I could have had no conception of its real meaning, nor can anyone else imagine, without experience, the dreadful condition of a prisoner of war. Yet they say we are far better off than the Union soldiers in our own prisons at Richmond and Andersonville——

"Thank you, dear Virginia, for the good letters I have received from you since I came here. They alone have made existence endurable and I live day by day upon the hope that if I survive this experience I shall be rewarded by the fulfillment of your promise. I say if I survive this, because I have never recovered from the illness from which I suffered before coming here and I see no prospect of recovering from anything unless chance should bring

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me release from my present state. Write me as often as you can and believe me as ever,

Yours faithfully,
HUGH."

Virginia was sitting with her mother and Mrs. Chester and Kittie in the drawing-room when Hugh's letter was handed to her. She read it through carefully and then, returning it to the envelope, laid it down on the table beside her and resumed her embroidery.

"Is your letter from Hugh?" her mother asked.

"Yes, it's from Hugh," was the reply.

"Is he still in prison?" "Is he well?" asked Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Chester in the same breath.

"Yes, he is still in prison and no, he is not well. He says he has never recovered from the fever that troubled him before he was captured."

"I wonder what that fellow who said 'the times are out of joint' would think if he had been permitted to see this day when the low-born Yankee can thus hold in durance vile the very elect of southern gentlemen," complained Mrs. Chester who, in these latter times stood so in awe of her daughter that she seldom ventured an authority for her frequent quotations.

"Poor Hugh!" said Mrs. Lee, "it is too bad for one so young to have to endure such a trial."

"Yes, it's too bad," Virginia replied. "Sometimes I am sorry Hugh ever enlisted for his heart has never been in the struggle and I am sure that I am largely to blame for his present suffering."

"I think you reproach yourself unnecessarily about that, Virginia," Mrs. Lee said kindly. "You never urged Hugh to enlist, you know."

"No, I didn't urge him to do so," Virginia assented, "but the influence of my stronger will was just as effec-

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tive as direct persuasion could have been. I should have known better than to allow him to do it. I hate being responsible for other people's actions. Hugh always did what he thought I wanted him to do, even when we were children."

"What else should he do?" asked Mrs. Chester with unusual spirit. "I'm sure I don't know what would have become of me, frail as I have always been, if Marion had not consulted my wishes always. You may find that trait in Hugh's character very convenient later on, Virginia."

"Possibly," Virginia admitted indifferently, and again she glanced at Kittie to see what effect the conversation had upon her, but Kittie was silent and impenetrable.

That night as Virginia sat brushing her own hair after her return from a social function at an earlier hour than usual, the door opened softly and Kittie entered in a trailing pink robe which set off her beauty more than the richest gown could have done. With a contented air, she seated herself on a low stool at her cousin's feet, saying coaxingly:

"I was not sleepy, Virginia, so I thought I would come in with you a little while. I do so love to visit in the glow of the firelight."

"That's right, dear. You may come to visit with me whenever it pleases you. I am always glad to see you, for I, too, like to visit in the firelight and I am not sleepy, myself, to-night."

"What were you thinking of when I came in, Virginia? It seems to me you are always thinking—but then I presume an engaged girl has a great deal to think about."

"Do I seem to be always thinking, dear?" Virginia asked. "I have no intention of doing so. It is a luxury in which I do not wish to indulge."

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"Do you mind telling me what you were thinking of to-night?" Kittie persisted.

"Not at all, I was thinking of Hugh," was the frank reply.

"Tell me something of Hugh, Virginia, something he said in that long letter. You were so indefinite and unsatisfactory downstairs this morning," Kittie said complainingly.

"The letter is here, you may read it for yourself, little one," Virginia said tenderly. "There is nothing in it that Hugh could object to your seeing," and, going to a little desk, she took the letter from a drawer and handed it to her cousin, at the same time drawing up a stand with a softly shaded lamp on it.

Kittie read the letter and then looking up at her cousin's face said impulsively, "Poor Hugh! I wonder, Virginia, that you can stay away from him when he is in such trouble, and sick, too."

Virginia regarded her companion thoughtfully for a moment and, patting her soft cheek, said gently, "What a pity Hugh did not love you instead of me, Kittie. You are much better suited to his taste than I am. I have often wished it had happened so."

"Why, Virginia? Don't you love Hugh yourself?" Kittie exclaimed.

"O, yes, I am greatly attached to Hugh," was the quick rejoinder. "I am used to him, you know."

"No, no, I don't mean that, I mean do you really love him?" Kittie demanded with wilful persistency.

"Yes, I think I do, in a way," was the evasive reply. "You know people's ways of doing things differ greatly."

"No, I see you do *not* love him as you should, and he deserves a better fate than to be married to an unloving wife. You should never have promised to marry him,

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feeling as you do," and the little sage shook her bright curls disapprovingly.

"Ah! but you do not understand, Kittie. It was when he was going back to the war for my sake and I could not deny him a promise that made him go away happy," Virginia replied.

"He might have been happier at the time but that will not compensate for a lifelong misery," Kitty argued.

"Never you fear for that, my dear. When once I am married to Hugh I'll be as faithful and kind as any wife could be. It will be a part of my religion," said Virginia.

Kittie was silenced but not convinced and, for a time, the two sat gazing thoughtfully into the glowing depths of the fire, each one painting a picture in somber hues peculiarly at variance with the brightness of their surroundings.

"Virginia, what is Philip Blair like now? Is he as splendid as he was three years and a half ago?"

The question was so sudden and, presumably, so foreign to their conversation that it took Virginia unawares. The mention of Philip's name sent a shock all through her being and, like a flash, the emotion showed itself in her face. Kittie caught the look and waited with bated breath for Virginia's answer.

"Yes, Kittie," Virginia at length said slowly, "there's no denying that Philip Blair is an admirable man."

Kittie had seen into the depths of her cousin's heart. Virginia knew and made no attempt to deny. "I am sorry for you, Virginia," Kittie said, oh! so earnestly and tenderly, "I know what it is to hunger for something I can never have."

A few minutes longer they sat together in silence and then Kittie said good-night and went away to her room.

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All this was but an accompaniment in a minor key to the gayer harmony of their everyday life. The winter with its round of pleasures hurried quickly by and with the early spring Colonel Chester came home for a visit of two weeks with his family before the opening of the campaign in defence of Atlanta. His tone had lost something of its bravado nature and his face grew serious as he spoke of the approach of Sherman and his northern legions.

"Then, papa, do you think we shall be defeated?" Kit-tie asked in alarm.

"No, I can't say I do, but it will be a very close and bitter contest, I realize that," he replied.

"Do you think you have a better army here than we had at Chattanooga?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"We have a different general," Colonel Chester answered.

"Do you regard Johnston as greatly superior to Bragg?" Virginia asked incredulously.

"Well, he at least has Bragg's mistakes to profit by and I believe him capable of doing so," Colonel Chester said without committing himself to a definite opinion.

After this the family were in a constant state of expectancy, watching eagerly for the reports of Sherman's movements as they came to them either through the papers or in Colonel Chester's letters. Mrs. Lee and Virginia, realizing from sad experience, the trials before them, began once more the tiresome process of watching and waiting.

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CHAPTER XX.

ON a raw stormy night in January, when wind and rain and sleet and snow seemed to have leagued themselves in bitter hostility to the unfortunate wayfarer, a closed carriage drew up in front of a handsome residence on a fashionable street of Rochester, New York. The driver looked in at the open parlor windows and shrugged his shoulders discontentedly as he contrasted the warmth and brightness and comfort there with the cold and darkness about him, muttering an impatient invective against bad luck and poverty as he descended from the box; but he opened the carriage with all the deference due a man who knocks at the door of such a house, whether in the capacity of owner or of visitor.

A moment later, Philip Blair sprang out upon the pavement, paid his fare, and, hurrying up the steps, gave an energetic pull at the bell. He had barely time to unbutton his great coat, turn back the collar and shake off the rain drops before the hall door was opened and a flood of light enveloped him. Brushing past the servant who admitted him, he stepped quickly across the broad hall and entered the parlor where two ladies sat talking together before an open fire. His footsteps were so muffled by the soft carpets that they were unaware of his presence until he was quite inside the room.

"Mother! Alice!" he said joyfully, reaching out his arms toward them.

"Philip!" "Philip!" they cried in answer to the familiar tones and, springing up, the mother and sister overwhelmed him with such a welcome as only the returning soldier receives.

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Doubtless there are mothers and sisters the world over who know how the next few hours were spent in that Rochester home. Mrs. Blair had been a widow since Philip was a mere lad and her life was devoted to the interests of these two, her only children. The very year the war began, the daughter had married Bradley Moreton and gone to live in a distant part of the city. When Philip enlisted, both he and Mrs. Moreton urged their mother to dispose of her residence and go to live with the latter, but Mrs. Blair, like all women who have once known the happiness of their own home, preferred to remain where she was, insisting that so long as her son was unmarried she would keep this home for him, that when he was settled she might consider the advisability of such a change as the one proposed.

"How is it that you are here at this time of night, Alice? Where's Bradley?" Philip asked as he made himself comfortable before the fire.

"He has gone west on a business trip and I have been visiting mother since he left, almost a week ago," was the reply.

"Well, of course I'm sorry not to see Bradley," Philip said, "but after all it seems very like old times to be here, just you and mother and I, doesn't it?"

"Don't you see how much better it is that I didn't leave our home as you wished me to do?" said Mrs. Blair.

"Yes, I was thinking on my way north that it was very agreeable to be coming back to the old place. It wouldn't be quite the same to go to another house, even though it were Alice's," Philip replied, adding immediately, "By the way, mother, I hope you have something good for dinner. I am ravenously hungry. You know I have not had a genuine home dinner for a long time."

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"No," his mother said sympathizingly, "I presume there are no homes where you have been that you would care to visit."

"Not so much that, mother," he answered, smiling, "as that there were no homes where they cared to have me visit. You know the southern people are not keeping open house for the reception of Union soldiers; indeed, they are in no condition just now to receive anyone."

"Are they so poor down there?" Mrs. Moreton asked.

"You have no conception, Alice, of the condition the people are in where I have been. Elegant homes are dilapidated or destroyed and fine plantations are a wilderness of weeds," Philip said, proceeding to illustrate by an account of the despoiling of Lee's Summit.

"Is that honorable warfare, Philip?" Mrs. Moreton asked doubtfully. "It seems to me our armies have no right to bring such calamities upon private citizens."

"It does seem so at first thought, Alice," Philip replied gravely, "especially when such deprivations come upon people with whom we have a personal reason for sympathizing, but it is the quickest way to end this cruel and expensive war. You know there are bodily ailments that require heroic treatment. Secession is a canker on the body politic which only the deepest probing can eradicate."

"I suppose you are right," Mrs. Moreton assented, "but it will be a blessing when all this is ended."

"I am glad you are not going back to Tennessee, son," said Mrs. Blair, whose mind was greatly more concerned about Philip than about the war or the privations of the southern people, "I have always felt more anxiety about you since you left the east because you are so much farther from home."

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"I am not sure that I shall not return to Tennessee yet, mother," Philip replied.

"Why, you wrote that your regiment was already gone, and Healy with them," his mother said in surprise.

"So they have," was the answer, "but I am thinking seriously of obtaining a transfer to Sherman's army. Accidentally, I grew into friendly relations with General Sherman before I left Chattanooga and I think, through his influence, I can get permission to join his command if I choose to do so."

"But why should you wish to go there again, brother? It must be a much harder field than Virginia," Mrs. Moreton urged.

"Because there is just the kind of work that I like, to be done in the south, while I see nothing whatever of interest in Virginia," was the reply.

"If you mean there will be more fighting in the south, I cannot understand why you prefer to return there. Besides, Philip, it will greatly increase my anxiety to have you separated from Tom. There is a comfort to me in the thought that he is with you to look after you a little," Mrs. Blair said pleadingly.

"I mean to take Tom back with me, if possible," Philip answered.

"What do you think will be done in the south, brother?" Mrs. Moreton asked.

"I think General Sherman will carry the war into the heart of the Confederate states, leaving desolation in his path," was the grave reply.

"O, it is pitiful," the sister said. "General Sherman must be a very severe man."

"It is pitiful, but it is necessary to save the Union and establish its authority beyond dispute, and that is the

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task before us. General Sherman is not severe but wise and far-seeing," Philip said, earnestly.

After this the conversation was of home affairs and interests, and continued through the dinner hour and the long evening that followed, until Mrs. Blair, with a mother's consideration, sent Philip away to bed for the rest he needed after his long journey.

During the month that followed, the war-worn soldier thoroughly enjoyed his respite from the duties of military life, and the association with his mother and sister, and with Bradley Moreton after his return; but he often found his mind wandering far away in the southland, trying to frame some excuse for Virginia Lee's conduct toward him since he last saw her. Why had she left Tennessee without a word to him? Lying in his sick room near Lookout Mountain, he had been able to explain her action, attributing it to the fact of his never having given her a definite understanding of his real attitude toward her. Now, however, he had not even this flimsy argument to bolster up his wavering hope. Why had she not answered the long letter he had written her from Chattanooga? Surely it had been explicit enough in its declarations. These were the questions that occupied his mind oftenest and that he was never able to answer with any degree of satisfaction to himself. He was not shaken, however, in his determination to return to the army now in Georgia, and before the month closed he had completed the arrangements for the transfer of himself and Healy to Sherman's army.

One day, at his sister's home, he sat for a long while looking out of the window in a brown study.

"What are you thinking about, Philip," Mrs. Moreton asked.

"I was thinking of the Lees," was the reply. "I wish

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you could know them, Alice. I'm sure you would like them."

"What were they like, brother? I remember hearing you speak of them before," the sister said, interested, as usual, in anything concerning Philip's experience during his absence.

"They are ladies, Alice, in every respect," he answered. "You, with your northern prejudices, would be surprised to find such ladies south of the Mason and Dixon line. I tell you, they would be congenial associates for you and mother, and I, at least, have no higher compliment to pay a lady."

"Thank you, Philip, you were always a doting son and brother," Mrs. Moreton said, laughing, not yet observing how much more seriously her brother was taking the conversation than she herself was. "I should like to see your southern ladies if their name is Lee, but I presume I never shall."

"Maybe not." Philip answered in a disconsolate tone that attracted his sister's attention, and she looked up at him quickly, wondering what it meant. Philip returned her glance with a peculiar expression she did not understand. "What would you say, Alice, to a Tennessee rebel for a sister one of these days?" he asked, curiously.

"I should say it would be a most extraordinary and unexpected thing. You cannot mean it seriously, Philip?" she replied.

"Yes, I do," Philip said, earnestly. "Would you object?"

"I scarcely know how to answer, Philip. It is hard to overcome a lifelong prejudice, you know, and yet I cannot think you would marry a woman that I should hesitate to receive as a sister. Do you mean Virginia Lee? Tell me more of her, is she handsome?"

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"Yes, I mean Virginia Lee," Philip answered, "and, yes, I call her handsome. She may not have what some people would call a beautiful face, I suppose, but it is attractive in every detail, and she is refined and intelligent. However, it seems presumptuous to be discussing the matter so coolly when I have no reason to suppose she would consider the question of marrying me."

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Moreton. "Any girl might consider herself fortunate to marry you, Philip."

"There's no family egotism apparent in our conversation, Alice," Philip answered, smiling at his sister's enthusiasm.

"It isn't egotism, it's the truth, and I'll trust it to the judgment of anybody that knows you."

"Well, Alice, time will tell whether Virginia Lee looks at me through the same rosy spectacles, for I have fully determined to go back to the south. She is in Atlanta now, and Sherman's army is going there in the spring.

"That explains your anxiety to return to Tennessee, brother. It's rather a new thing for Philip Blair to be regulating his conduct by the caprices of a woman, is it not?"

At this juncture Mrs. Blair entered the room. "What are you talking about?" she asked. "I always know I am missing something interesting when I am called away for an hour."

Mrs. Moreton looked quickly at her brother, who replied, "Of the people who lived on the plantation where I was last fall and who took care of Tom Healy when he was wounded." Someway, it was not so easy to talk to his mother as to his sister.

"Why have you never told us more about your own sickness and the people who cared for you?" his mother asked. "I am sure I should like to know them and tell

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them how grateful I am to them for their kindness to you."

"I have told you about all there is to tell," he replied. "While they were good people and I esteem them highly, yet what they did for me they did for money and they received it. As for my wounds, the ball cut through my arm here, as I told you the night I came, making a painful flesh wound, but it soon healed. It was of no consequence."

"It is of consequence to me," said Mrs. Blair. "It terrifies me every time I think of the narrow escape you had and it is like taking my life to see you start back."

With all her devotion to her children, Mrs. Blair had always been so much of a "return-with-your-shield-or-on-it" woman that she seldom expressed her fears so strongly. Yet Philip had divined her feelings with reference to his wounds, and for that reason he had concealed their real nature and had spoken as lightly of them as he could, that she might not be unnecessarily distressed when the time came for his return.

"Don't let yourself think of it in that way, mother. It may be I shall never be engaged in another real battle. I am convinced the worst of the war is over."

"I pray God it may be so," Mrs. Blair said, fervently.

A week later Philip bade his loved ones good-bye and started on the return trip, going by way of Washington, where he was joined by Tom Healy who entered numerous complaints at the change.

"Perfect fool's errand," he growled, "galavantin' round over the country huntin' a chance to get shot."

"You needn't go, Tom, if you don't want to. Stay where you are by all means. I only thought you might prefer to go with me, and you consented to the change of your own accord," Blair insisted, good-naturedly.

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"No, I'll be goin' wherever you do," Tom answered. "A pretty fix you'd be in now if I hadn't been there to pull you out o' the pile o' dead an' wounded on Lookout Mountain."

"Don't go just on my account," Philip insisted. "I can look after myself, I assure you."

"There's no use arguin' the question, Mister Philip. I've promised your mother to stan' by you through this thing and I'll keep my word. Besides," he added, with a knowing wink, "who knows but I may get a chance to clap my eye on the 'ansome little rebel again one o' these days."

"Who knows," Philip answered, addressing himself with much interest to the paper he was reading.

A few days more found these strange companions among the familiar scenes about Chattanooga, and the months of March and April were spent in preparations and expeditions preliminary to the invasion of the cotton growing states, which, in unison with General Grant's campaign in Virginia, completed the prostration of the southern cause and compelled the relinquishment of the unfortunate pseudo-nationality known as the Confederate States of America.

Tom Healy seized upon the first days of leisure to make a hurried trip to Lee's Summit to pay his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Hudson and make inquiries concerning Mrs. Lee and Virginia, duly reporting such information as he received to Mister Philip, watching the Lieutenant closely during the recital to see what effect his words produced. But Philip was not to be entrapped so easily into revealing his private hopes and expectations with reference to Virginia Lee. He carefully kept his own counsel, giving only such heed to Tom's account as he might have given to tidings concerning any other acquaintance. Two points,

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especially, he made a mental note of—the Lees were still in Atlanta and they were at the home of the Chesters—and in the privacy of his own quarters he referred to his notebook to assure himself he had not lost the address given him by Mrs. Hudson, thinking of a possible occasion when he might need it.

As the first of May approached, General Sherman recalled his scattered forces and reconstructed his army for that descent upon Georgia which trampled into the earth the homes and fortunes of thousands and thousands of people. The march through Georgia! It can only be likened to the reputed effect (fabled or real, I cannot say) of the dreaded centipede, which, poisoning as it crawls, leaves a track of putrid flesh behind, or to the demoniac fury of the cyclone cloud which drags its horrid length along the earth, dealing death and destruction to everything in its path. Such a campaign can be justified only on the principle that the end justifies the means. It is probable that this wholesale obliteration of material interests did more toward settling the terrible conflict than any other course could have done, and it is possible for us all at this late day to see what General Sherman saw more than forty years ago, that the quickest way, though painful, was the best and most merciful.

Philip Blair had grown in favor with his commander as their acquaintance developed, and when, in obedience to a telegram from General Grant, Sherman's army set forth on its journey southward, Lieutenant Blair had been promoted to the rank of Captain in the General's favorite regiment.

Philip was conscious of unusual elation, and he congratulated himself on the promised success of his plans, when, amid flash of arms and blare of trumpet, his face was fairly turned toward Atlanta and the realization of the dream that had haunted his mind for months.

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CHAPTER XXI.

The brief breathing spell that succeeded the operations about Chattanooga was but a temporary lull in the conflict, and each side, in its own way, occupied the interval in making ready for the extensive campaigns planned for the ensuing spring and summer. There was great glee in Atlanta when it was known that the manœuvres for the defence of the city had been given to the exclusive charge of General Joseph E. Johnston, who was held in high esteem by the people there and whose family was at the time in their midst ; but when dark war clouds bore down upon them from the north and portentous mutterings were heard on every hand, "a change came over the spirit of their dreams," and day by day the gloom deepened and hung like a pall above them. Every heart paused with dark forebodings, "a solemn stillness filled the air" as the inhabitants went forth with blanched, expectant faces to talk in hushed tones of the approaching danger. Even in the dead of night the slumberer started from her dreams with the dread conviction that the foe had come ; it was as if the town-crier went through the streets crying, "Woe ! Woe ! Woe ! Prepare for the impending doom !"

There came an occasional day when an exaggerated report of some inconsiderable success on the part of Johnston's forces cast a momentary brightness over the city, and it was enlivened by feeble huzzas and spiritless demonstrations of joy ; but such respites were of short duration, and only served, like the lightning's flash, to intensify the succeeding darkness.

Early in June the thoughts and sympathies of the

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Chester home were violently turned from contemplation of public danger by the arrival of a special messenger with the intelligence that Colonel Chester had the day before been severely wounded, and that he was asking constantly for some one to bring his wife and daughter to him. Though almost overwhelmed with distress and alarm, Mrs. Chester and Kittie lost no time in complying with the request, and Mrs. Lee and Virginia were left in charge of affairs at home.

For several days the surgeons were hopeful that the Colonel's strong constitution would enable him to throw off the evil results attendant upon his injuries, and at the end of a week Kittie returned to Atlanta leaving Mrs. Chester, who, in this time of trial, showed a reserve force which her sheltered, pampered life had never called forth, to minister to the comfort and welfare of the patient. Then followed week after week of anxious waiting long drawn out. Colonel Chester did not recover from his wounds, but nature with marvellous persistency maintained the desperate struggle for existence. At length in utter hopelessness he begged to be taken to Atlanta that he might die amid the familiar scenes of home. With the assistance of friends Mrs. Chester was able to carry out this wish, but it was a melancholy home-coming. No bright flags floated from the porches, no garlands or gay festoons of flowers were twined for the returning soldier; with soft tread and with hushed voices the members of the household sorrowfully awaited the coming of the stricken master.

At first the change seemed beneficial, and delusive hope whispered encouragement to the eager watchers; but it was in vain. A short time brought about the inevitable reaction, and day by day life could be seen slowly but surely ebbing away.

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Meanwhile, that other conflict, too, went on. General Johnston, upbraided and neglected by the government he served, stubbornly resisted the progress of the Union army. Inch by inch he yielded his ground, now falling behind this mountain or crossing that stream, and again abandoning one line of fortifications only to intrench himself in others giving promise of greater security; continually hoping against hope that reinforcements might yet be furnished him in time to save the city and, with it, the tottering cause. This struggle, too, was vain. Nearer and nearer came the conquering legions. Even the untimely and unjust change of Confederate commanders could not arrest their approach, and, at last, warned by heavy explosions of ammunition that Atlanta had been evacuated, the Union army entered it in triumph during the first days of September.

And here we pause to take off our shoes and advance with cautious step, for the ground whereon we tread is dangerous ground. Just how far we may lawfully sympathize with the advocates of a mistaken and unfortunate cause, how far we may censure or praise the judicious severity of a military dictator in the service of a righteous and victorious principle, it is difficult to determine.

In the very nature of things, the rules which regulate the rights and conduct of individuals or communities must necessarily infringe upon the interests of some. Hence, the decrees of a ruler of men in any capacity whatsoever, should be based upon that principle which is the foundation of all just and equitable laws—that that is best which works the greatest good to the greatest number.

Even were it not presumptuous to do so, we have neither time nor inclination to relate the details or to discuss the fairness of General Sherman's conduct in Atlanta. Like the surgeon who amputates the limb rather than

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prolong the agony or imperil the life of the sufferer, he dealt with the situation according to his conception of duty, and we should grant him the same consideration claimed by his enemies for themselves—the mantle of charity for the man who does what he believes to be right.

The family of Colonel Chester were so absorbed in their own sorrow that they had little interest in the momentous events occurring outside their own walls and received little information concerning them. They heard the explosions in the night and learned of the withdrawal of their own army and the entrance of the besiegers, but beyond this they knew nothing. Their first intimation of the Union general's intention of burning the city was the discovery of fires now lighting up the horizon in various quarters, and, later on, bursting into towering flames, turning the darkness of night into the glare of the noon-day sun. The inmates of the house rushed together with fear and dread depicted on every countenance, inquiring the meaning of the direful sight.

"It is evident," Virginia said, "that the Yankees are setting fire to the city everywhere."

"You can't mean it, Virginia," Kittie exclaimed, indignantly. "Do you believe they would do such a thing?"

"Some one is doing it," was the reply, "and our own men are gone, you know. What else could all this mean?"

"And will they come here, do you think, to set this house on fire?" asked Mrs. Lee in wild excitement, visions of her own experience passing through her mind.

The mere suggestion threw Mrs. Chester into a flood of passionate weeping, and, wringing her hands helplessly, she cried aloud:

"Oh! what shall we do! What shall we do! And poor Marion dying upstairs! It is cruel." And, rushing to his room, she threw herself upon her knees beside her un-

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conscious husband who, for several days, had seldom aroused from the lethargic sleep which seemed to benumb the last feeble powers of mind and body.

Virginia sent Mrs. Lee to the sick room to comfort Mrs. Chester while she and Kittie began hasty preparations for sudden flight, should it become necessary.

"Oh! how can we leave this house! I never heard of anything so cruel. Look at my poor husband!" Mrs. Chester moaned, in an undertone, burying her face in an agony of grief.

Words seemed so inadequate that Mrs. Lee could only sit down beside her sister-in-law and take her hand in silent sympathy. And so they two waited there, alone with their sorrow, alone with their agonizing fear.

The young girls hurried to their rooms to collect the few articles they could carry from the house. Kittie, remembering certain treasures in the rooms below, started to secure them. At the moment there was a loud knocking at the door. Believing their time had come, she would have fled, but the thought of her father restrained her and gave her courage. Flying down the steps, she threw the door wide open to face a small party of soldiers whose leader rudely pushed his way across the threshold. Kittie threw herself on her knees at his feet, crying:

"Pray, pray, spare this house. My father is dying. Spare us until he is gone and then burn the house when you will."

"Damn the house!" was the brutal reply. "I am here for what there is in it. Come on boys," and, forcing his way past her, followed by three other men, the leader began his search for gain.

With the blood freezing in her veins from fear, Kittie arose to her feet and grimly watched the progress of the intruders. One firm resolve she had made in her heart—

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they should never go up those stairs while she had strength to resist them, and, planting herself firmly on the steps, she awaited their return. Nor had she long to wait. Rich as were the furnishings of the living rooms, they were not what the ruffians sought. They were too cumbersome to be of value to the purloiner, and, hurrying with noisy tread through the long hall, the leader called, surlily:

"The things we are after are in the upper rooms. I've been in these fine houses before, and the richest layouts of all are in the ladies' chambers."

The critical moment for Kittie had come, and, bracing herself for a struggle, she said, with determination:

"You shall never ascend these stairs to disturb the dying slumber of my father unless you kill me first."

"I don't want to kill you, young woman, but I come here to git jewels and I mean to have 'em. They are all there is of real worth in houses like this. Stand out of the way, will you?"

"If I give you my jewels will you leave the house?" Kittie asked, eagerly.

"Perhaps we might if you give us enough of 'em," was the reply.

"Sallie," Kittie called to Mrs. Lee's servant who stood trembling in the dining-room door, "come here to me. You go up to my room," she continued, as the black girl approached, "and bring my jewel case out of the little desk where I always keep it."

A few minutes sufficed for Sallie to discharge the errand, and, returning quickly, she placed the treasure in Kittie's hand. The young girl opened the lid, and, glancing at the sparkling gems, laid them lovingly against her cheek and then handed them to the man who gloated over them with a tantalizing air.

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"This is the real stuff, boys," he said, with a contemptible leer, "but it's not enough. It's been my experience that the old ones in these parts often has more of this sort of thing than the young ones. I guess, after all, we'd better go up and look around for ourselves."

"But you promised not to, Colonel," one of his companions objected.

"Don't dictate to me, damn you!" the leader snarled. "Besides I didn't promise, I only said if 'twas enough, an' it ain't. It ain't half enough."

Kittie renewed her importunities with all the earnestness at her command.

"Please, please, sir, if you have any mercy or any honor, do not force your way up these steps. Believe me, my father is in a dying condition and the noise of such an intrusion will cruelly disturb him and will drive my mother to insanity."

"Have done with all this," the man cried, impatiently, and, seizing Kittie's arm, he pulled her by force from the stairs and she fell fainting at his feet.

At the same instant there was a steady tread of marching soldiers along the street outside, and before the men could collect themselves for concerted action, a tall form appeared at the outer door and a firm voice said, sternly.

"Painter, come out of there and all of your dastardly followers with you."

"I'll do no such a damned thing," Painter exclaimed, resentfully. "What right have you to command me to do anything. You forget your rank, sir, and mine," he continued, pompously.

"I have the oldest right ever exercised by man, the right of might," the newcomer said, angrily, and he seized Painter by the collar and flung him out of the door with scorn and contempt, saying, as he did so, "Now stand

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there like a man while I read you my commission from our commander," and the speaker, taking a paper from his pocket, read as follows:

"I hereby commission the bearer of this paper to seize and send under guard to my presence every officer of whatever rank, and every private soldier, found in the act of entering or purloining the private homes of this city.

(Signed) WILLIAM T. SHERMAN."

"Guards, do your duty!" and Colonel Painter and his allies were soon marching toward headquarters, attended by an escort of a dozen soldiers.

Virginia was conscious of an unusual commotion in the house for several minutes before she was aroused to the fact that strange and angry voices were talking in the hall below. Then, hastening to the stairway, she reached the landing just in time to hear Painter's last words and see Kittie fall. Her heart stood still as she caught the hatefully familiar tones and realized the meaning of the presence of such a man in the house. While she paused a brief second wondering what to do next, the new actor appeared on the scene, and just in proportion as she had shrunk in dismay before, her heart now gave a great bound of joy as she listened to the altercation between the two men.

As the squad of soldiers left the house with their charge, Virginia ran down the stairs to her cousin's assistance while the tall officer, seeing a woman lying on the floor, turned to help her. There was a momentary glance of recognition and then, laying her hand impulsively on the soldier's arm, Virginia exclaimed:

"Thank God! you have come."

"Thank God! I have found you," he echoed fervently, tenderly clasping the hand in his own.

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There was no time for further greeting, and Philip Blair stooped to raise the unconscious girl from the floor.

"I must carry her into the open air," he said. "I fear she has had a great fright. Bring me some water for her, will you?"

Virginia hurried to the dining-room where a tankard of water always stood on the sideboard. When she returned, Philip had laid Kittie on a settee and was fanning her vigorously. The fresh air and cool water speedily restored her to consciousness, and in a short time the three were again living over the exciting scene.

Philip assured them that there was no danger of being turned from their home that night, that only the business centers and the public buildings would be burned, not the private residences.

"O, joy!" exclaimed Kittie. "I must run and tell mamma that at once. It will be joyful news to her."

When Philip and Virginia were left alone the latter turned toward the long line of burning buildings. "Do you think that is right?" she asked, abruptly.

He hesitated a moment and then answered, firmly, "Yes, I think it is right because it is necessary."

"How strangely ideas of right can differ," she answered.

"We look at things from different points of view," he replied.

"How did you happen to be here to-night?" she asked.

"I didn't 'happen' to be here. I never just 'happen' to be where you are," he replied, regarding her with a look that sent a thrill of happiness all through her being. "My presence here was designed months ago. I knew you would need me."

As he ceased speaking the tramp of soldiers was again

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heard approaching. Taking Virginia's hand in his, he said, earnestly:

"There, my men are returning and I must be off. Others may need the same service I have done you."

"Must you go so soon?" she asked, regretfully. "Will you come again?"

"That depends entirely upon yourself. Do you wish me to come again?"

Virginia stood for a moment with downcast eyes, debating with herself whether or not she should flee from temptation and hide herself in the farthest corner of the house, then resolutely raising her eyes she looked straight into his and answered:

"Yes, I wish you to come again."

"As soon as my duties will permit," he said. The soldier head bowed low over the hand he still held in his own. So low, indeed—but no! such a thing was not to be thought of. He sprang down from the piazza and took his place at the head of his men.

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CHAPTER XXII.

"A gemman to see Miss Lee," the black girl announced as she peeped in at the door which stood ajar, and then, catching a glimpse of Virginia, she stepped into the room saying, impulsively:

"Don' young Miss look boo'ful in dat ar dress. Fine fethahs make fine bu'ds, I tells ye."

"Of course you don't mean to say that I am not a fine bird, Martha, but who is the gentleman? Did he give his name?" Virginia asked, hastily putting in an additional pin here and there and looping back her locks in a more becoming fashion.

"No, Miss. He jes axes me wus Miss Lee heah an' I says 'ole missus or Miss Ginnie,' and he says, 'Miss Ginnie, of co's'."

"Very well, say to the gentleman that I will be down in a minute," Virginia replied, wishing to gain time to still the beating of her heart and regain her usual composure.

Notwithstanding her experience in watching for Philip Blair at Lee's Summit, she had felt an absolute certainty that he would come on this first evening, and as soon as dinner was over she went to her room to make a toilet in which she hesitated to appear before Mrs. Chester and Kittie under the shadow of the great sorrow resting upon them.

She had attired herself in an elegant gown such as Philip had never seen her wear, and now, as she looked with satisfaction upon the image reflected from her mirror, she wondered if, after all, he would be pleased with her appearance or disgusted with her vanity in thus arraying herself at a time like this.

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Philip heard the soft rustle of her dress on the stairs, and when she appeared at the door he arose and, throwing back his fine head, advanced to the middle of the room to meet her, looking taller and more commanding than ever in his Captain's uniform.

He looked at Virginia in pleased surprise and, holding out his hands, said, earnestly, "Is it possible this is the same Virginia Lee I knew in Tennessee less than a year ago?"

"The very same," she answered, smiling back at him and blushing as she suffered him to clasp her hands.

"Fate is really better to us sometimes than we expect," he said. "If a fortune teller had said last spring that I should realize my dreams like this, I should have laughed in derision."

"Did you dream you saw me like this?" Virginia asked, innocently.

"Not like *this*," he replied. "It was good enough to dream of you at all. But to see you looking thus, and with my natural eyes! 'Tis almost too good to be true. I am half afraid to move lest I should waken in my soldier's bed and find you but a lovely vision."

Blair stepped back a little way and stood looking at her with honest admiration in his eyes. "It was for this," he said, "that I made the long journey from Rochester to Atlanta. To-night I have my reward for every hardship I have endured." As he spoke, he led her to a sofa and seated himself beside her.

"I thought you came to serve your country," Virginia said a little sarcastically. It was a last despairing effort to rescue herself from the rushing current that she knew was bearing her on toward danger.

"I have not neglected the service of my country," Philip returned with a tinge of resentment in his manner.

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"I could not have served it more faithfully had you not been in existence than I have done in the last six months, and, happy as I am to be here to-night, I should not have come were it not consistent with my duty as a soldier."

"Forgive me, *Captain Blair*—for I see you, too, have changed somewhat since I saw you in Tennessee. My remark was unjust and I did not mean it. I know you are a good soldier. But seriously, will you not tell me how it is that you are here? I supposed you were in Virginia or Maryland. Did you not write that your regiment had been recalled to the east?"

Philip glanced at her quickly as she said this and a flush of embarrassment spread over her face as she realized that she had herself opened a subject she had hoped to avoid.

"You did receive my letter then?" he said, and Virginia, returning his piercing gaze, answered frankly: "Yes, I received your letter."

He continued to look at her steadily for a moment before he said, "May I ask why you did not answer it?"

"I did not think it best," she replied simply and candidly.

"Was there anything in it to offend you? I did not intend there should be."

"No, O, no," she answered. "It was the best letter I ever received."

"It was a great disappointment to me—your not answering. I looked for an answer for a long time."

"I feared you would."

Philip still watched her closely with an air of uncertainty. At length he said with some hesitation, "There is one thing more I should like to ask."

"What is it?" Virginia said a little faintly.

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"Why did you leave Tennessee without sending me a message?"

"I thought it right to do so," was the reply.

"Did you know that I had been severely wounded?" he asked with some concern.

Virginia waited a moment to be sure of her self-control. She was toying with a long silk tassel in her lap and, without looking up, she answered, "Yes, I heard of it."

"Did you not think it right to express sympathy for me at such a time?"

"No, I didn't think it right at the time."

"I did not think you were so prejudiced as that," Philip said in a disappointed tone.

"O, believe me, Captain Blair, it was not on account of our different views concerning the war. Don't think me capable of that."

"Then did you really care about my misfortune?" Philip insisted.

"Care!" she exclaimed, glancing up at him quickly with a look of pain in her eyes as the recollection of her suffering at Lee's Summit swept over her. "Pray, Captain Blair, do not catechise me further. Be content when I tell you that I have tried as hard to do right as you have tried to do your duty as a soldier."

Philip looked at her curiously for a moment and then answered, "Of course I do not understand you but I'll take you on faith as I do the Bible. Tell me one thing more, though. It concerns me more deeply just now than these things that happened months ago. Do you think it is not right that I should be here to-night?"

"I have not considered that phase of the question," she said evasively.

"Would you rather I'd go away? Nothing is farther

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from my desire than to distress or inconvenience you in the slightest degree," he said gently.

"No, no," she returned. "You know that I said I wished you to come."

"Very well, then," he said, "we'll drop this unsatisfactory topic and you must tell me all about what you have been doing since I saw you last."

The remainder of the evening was spent in an interchange of their thoughts and experiences during the months of separation. In bidding her good-bye, Philip held her away from him as he had done earlier in the evening.

"I like to see you dressed like this," he said. "It is a pleasing picture I shall carry in my mind until I come again—or am I to come again? Do you wish me to do so? You see, I do not ask if you think it will be right."

"You know that I wish you to come again," Virginia answered, and Philip left her, thinking with a smile of satisfaction of a possible day when he might introduce this matchless woman to the loved ones in his northern home.

Virginia went to her room with a feeling of unwonted happiness in her heart and fell asleep with sweet visions of Philip Blair floating through her mind, not even stopping to consider where all this was leading her.

Within a week Philip had so ingratiated himself with the family that he came and went with the freedom of an old friend, even visiting the sick room and performing acts of kindness for Colonel Chester, discharging important errands, and in many other ways standing between these unprotected women and the outside world. He completely won Kittie's favor by obtaining and returning to her the jewels that had been taken by Colonel Painter,

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explaining that Painter was not really a thief, nor were his followers.

"You know," he said, "it is an old-time maxim that to the victor belongs the spoils, and it gives a wide margin for plundering, as many people's ideas are very crude as to what are rightful spoils."

"Thank you, oh! thank you, Captain Blair," Kittie cried with shining eyes. "I cannot tell you how delighted I am. I never expected to see these things again," and she ran away to her room with the precious casket, caring very little for Painter's moral calibre now that her treasures were safe.

The same evening she said to her cousin when they were alone, "Isn't Captain Blair splendid?"

"Yes, he does very well for a Yankee," Virginia replied carelessly.

"For a Yankee!" Kittie exclaimed. "You know, Virginia, he is one of the finest men you ever saw, now isn't he?"

"Yes, I don't know but he is," was the response.

"And do you know, I think he perfectly adores *you*."

"O, no, you must be mistaken, my dear," Virginia answered in the same uninterested way.

"No, I am not mistaken. I know by the way he acts, and then I heard him say he came here by his own choice rather than return to the east where he belonged, and what did he do that for if not to find you?"

"Since when did my little cousin turn wiseacre, pray tell?" Virginia asked playfully, trying to avoid a more serious turn to the conversation. "He came to be under the command of General Sherman, whom he admires of all men."

"I haven't been in this world nineteen years for noth-

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ing, Miss Lee," Kittie returned. "I know a few things of *this* sort, if nothing more."

"And say, Virginia," she rattled on, "it's a pity you could not have met him sooner for he would suit you to a dot."

"Why don't you capture him yourself if you think he is so splendid?"

"O, he wouldn't do for a silly little thing like me. It would perfectly scare me to think of such a thing. No, no, dear, he is for a grand woman like you. Last night when you stood together under the chandelier looking over those pictures I thought I never saw so handsome a couple in my life," Kittie said enthusiastically.

"Hush, little one! You must not run on so. Remember I have promised to marry an officer in the Rebel army."

"Yes, I know," was the ready response, "and it is unjust to poor Hugh even to speak of such a thing. Of course, though, there is no danger of *your* not keeping a promise, Virginia."

"None in the least," Virginia answered proudly.

"After all, dear, you have never loved Hugh in the right way, and, really, while I am very fond of Hugh, yet Captain Blair does seem more like the kind of man you should marry."

"You're talking perfect nonsense, Kittie. Do you suppose that I could marry a *Yankee*, even were there no Hugh to be considered. What would my family say, and all my friends, to such an alliance as that?"

"Pshaw!" Kittie ejaculated contemptuously. "A girl could never regulate her affairs according to the whims of her family and her friends. So far as that argument is concerned, I shouldn't consider that. I mean to marry the man I love, if I can get him, regardless of politics or re-

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ligion." The little lady gave a scornful toss to her head as she left the room to attend to the domestic duties of which she had taken sole charge since her mother's time was so completely occupied in the sick room.

This and similar conversations brought many a pang of self-reproach to Virginia but she dismissed the sentiment, tired of fighting battles continually over the same question. She had done all she could to avoid temptation, she said within herself, and now that it was thrust upon her in spite of all her efforts, she would simply let matters take their course. This association with Philip Blair was very pleasant and she would enjoy it while it lasted. If it only prepared the way for future unhappiness, she would endure it when it came—"sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof."

She had scarcely settled to this conclusion when an incident, trivial in itself, occurred, which proved an additional prick to her sensitive conscience. Philip had been dining with the family and was afterward sitting with Virginia and Kittie looking over some old files of newspapers containing accounts and illustrations of important battles of the war. Philip was pointing out certain parts of the Gettysburg field where he had, himself, taken an active part in the fight when he suddenly recalled Hugh Cunningham and his brave conduct near Little Round Top.

"By the way, Kittie," he said, turning to Kittie with a smile, "I have been wishing all along to do something to win your favor. It's strange I should have forgotten the very thing that could fix my standing with you forever. That young Cunningham up in Tennessee, was wounded right in here," indicating the spot on the map. "I saw him fall after making one of the bravest stands of the whole engagement. Someway a pair of brown eyes

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just like yours kept haunting me all afternoon until, late in the evening, I went all over that part of the field searching for him. He was not there but the next day Tom and I came upon him in the woods a mile or more away. He was alone with his black man and was wounded and unconscious. We took him to a farm house where they promised to keep him until he was able to travel."

Kittie looked hesitatingly at Virginia in a way that puzzled Philip and gave him the impression that he had stumbled upon the wrong theme.

"Yes," she answered with evident embarrassment, "Hugh told Aunt Margaret about it when he was at home."

Virginia said nothing because she could think of nothing to say and Philip dismissed the subject from his mind with the reflection that in three years time a rupture had probably occurred between Hugh and Kittie.

All this time Colonel Chester lay in a death-like stupor, only now and then arousing to a sense of his surroundings and sinking again into sleep. It took many weeks for a sound heart and a sturdy pair of lungs to be worn out by diseased and impoverished blood.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

"No, Blair, I can't do it. I'm sorry to refuse you a request that seems reasonable and humane, but this order must be enforced to the letter."

"Understand, I have no objection to make to the order, General. The situation is peculiar and I have approved the measure from the first as necessary, under the circumstances. I only hoped to gain a respite in time for these people. I thought you might be induced to 'put yourself in the other fellow's place,' and consider your feelings were your own wife and daughter in the same position."

"Whenever I take up arms against my country, I shall ask no quarter for my wife and daughter at the hands of its defenders," was the reponse. "This war must be stopped and the only way to do it is to smash things wherever the army goes until the *people* are ready to cry to their leaders for peace even at the cost of submission."

"I realize all that, sir, and I am ready to stand by you in the course you have laid out, for I have seen nothing in your dealings with the enemy that is not honorable and wise; but you know it is natural for a man to make some effort to mitigate the severity of a measure when it seems to bear too heavily upon his friends," Blair returned.

"My friends are the friends of the Republic," General Sherman answered sternly, in a tone that savored slightly of reproof.

Philip's face flushed with resentment and a hasty retort sprang to his lips. "My allegiance as a citizen and a

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soldier is to the Republic and I defy any man to point to a single instance when I have disregarded it in either capacity, but my friends are my own as much as the coat I wear and I choose them to suit myself."

"Don't forget yourself, Captain Blair," the General said, with a smile of grim mischief lurking almost imperceptibly about the corners of his mouth. This same spirit of Philip's which might have been resented by a commander of less true greatness of soul, was the quality that most commended him to the favor of his illustrious chief.

"Pardon me, General," Blair replied with a deferential bow. "I have no wish to appear disrespectful to the man I honor most on earth, but there are private interests with which each man must deal for himself."

"You're right, Blair, you're right. My remark about my friends was thoughtless and, though true, is but an evidence of my characteristic bull-headedness, I admit. Who are these people, do you say?"

"They are people who were friends of mine in Tennessee before the war," Philip replied, not feeling it necessary to explain fully the relation between himself and the Lees and Chesters.

"How is it they are here now?" the General asked.

"After the fall of Chattanooga, two of the ladies, whose home was burned, found refuge with their relatives here in Atlanta," Blair explained.

"And you say the only man in the family is dying of wounds received while serving in Johnston's army?" General Sherman inquired.

"That is what I said, sir," was the reply.

"It is in truth a pitiful case, Blair, but there are scores of pitiful appeals brought to my notice daily and I must steel myself against them all. I have a higher duty than

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commiseration for the unfortunate. The interests of millions of good and loyal people are at stake as against these individual cases that I am asked to consider. There are yet ten days allowed for the execution of this order. You say this man is past all hope of recovery. It may be the time will be ample for their removal after his demise."

"Possibly so," Blair replied, "but it is sad to realize that the death of a husband and father is the greatest blessing to be craved. However, I shall not urge the claims of this family further. I have no desire to influence you to a step that is contrary to your judgment as the head of this army, even did I not know the uselessness of such an attempt."

"That's good, Blair. I like to hear you talk like that. You see, this city must be made a pure Gibraltar from which our future military operations in these states can be directed and I cannot have them either encumbered or endangered by the presence of the families of our enemies. I hope when next you ask a favor of me it will be of such a nature that I can grant it."

"I am confident you would grant it if it seemed right for you to do so, sir," and, with a parting salute, Philip took his leave and hastened immediately to the home of his friends.

For several days he had known of the requisition that the citizens should abandon their homes and withdraw from the city, but as no definite time had been fixed and no active measures had been taken for carrying out the decree, he had deferred speaking of it to Virginia or the Chesters, hesitating to add this burden to the sorrow already weighing upon them. Calling at the house on some trivial mission on the morning of which we write, he found Kittie and Virginia in great trouble and excitement

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over the tidings that had been brought to their ears that they must move at once.

"Why have you not told us of this?" Kittie asked reproachfully. "They say it has been known in the city for almost a week."

"Because I hoped to arrange with General Sherman to relieve you of this necessity for a time. I will go to him at once and see what can be done."

Upon this he left them to seek the interview already recorded, the result of which the reader already knows.

"You have not succeeded," Virginia said as she looked into his face when he returned.

"No, I have not succeeded," he answered. "General Sherman insists upon universal compliance with the decree."

"Do you think *this* is right?" Virginia asked in the tone she always assumed when appealing to him for an opinion on such a subject.

"Yes, from General Sherman's standpoint, I think it is right. From our point of view it is very sad," he answered, and Virginia's heart warmed toward him with gratitude as he thus allied himself with them in their sorrow.

"What *can* we do?" Kittie asked helplessly, her great brown eyes filled with tears.

"Do nothing for a while," Philip answered reassuringly. "There are yet ten days before the expiration of the allotted time."

"Uncle Marion will not be living ten days from now," Virginia said, putting her arm lovingly around her cousin as if to shield her from the cruel remark.

"No, I think myself he will be gone sooner than that," Blair replied, "and if he is not, we must then decide where

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it will be best for you to go and I will help you to make the change with as little disaster as possible."

"Thank you, Captain Blair, you are very kind and I am sure we are all most grateful to you," Kittie said sadly.

Bidding them keep a stout heart and rely on him to assist them, Philip left them while he went on to daily duties which he never neglected.

Colonel Chester was even nearer the end of his mortal journey than they supposed. On the evening of the same day he suddenly aroused to consciousness, talked rationally with his friends for a few moments, and then sank into a deep, peaceful sleep from which he never awoke, as the dying candle flares sometimes into a flame of unwonted brilliancy before it finally goes out. In the small hours of the night the members of the household were called to watch with him a little while until the change should come. There was no struggle, no sudden cry of pain. Little by little the breath grew shorter, the pulse grew fainter. At last there was a long, long sigh and Colonel Chester was no more upon this earth. "It was the old, old fashion. The fashion that came in with our first garments and will last unchanged until our race has run its course and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion—Death." The watchers about the bed mourned silently. Mrs. Chester sobbed softly to herself in an easy chair, while Kittie, falling upon her knees, poured out the agony of her first real sorrow. It was the beginning of those lessons in life's great school which would, in time, develop in her the grandeur of character she so longed to possess.

When morning came, Virginia sent a servant to Captain Blair to apprise him of her uncle's death. He came

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to them at once, accompanied by Tom Healy, and together the two men made preparation for the last sad rites which would consign the emaciated body to the tomb.

The shadows of twilight were gathering in the room before the work was fully done and Colonel Chester rested calmly in the open casket. Virginia, with loving forethought, was quietly arranging such flowers as she had been able to obtain, that the strange and unhappy surroundings might not impress themselves too glaringly upon the minds of the bereaved wife and daughter. Philip lingered near her, unwilling to leave until other friends should come to watch beside the bier during the long hours of night.

"Poor uncle Marion!" Virginia said sorrowfully. "So full of life and vigor in the spring time, he little thought of the condition to which these few months would bring him."

"Life is most uncertain at best," Philip replied, "and there is not much to hope for when a man embarks on the career of a soldier."

"And death seems such a terrible thing to me. I sometimes wonder if it were not better never to have been born when I consider the inevitable end to which we must all come."

"I like rather to think of death as Shelley thought of it—do you remember?" Philip said gently.

"No, I have never read Shelley. Tell me what he says."

"Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep.
He hath awakened from the dream of life.
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife.

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He hath outsoared the shadows of our night.
Envy and calumny and hate and pain
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again.
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey"—

"Yes, the sentiment is beautiful," Virginia said as her companion finished the quotation, "but it is hard to bring our hearts into accord with it when death has taken one of our own away."

"It was not so for me," Philip said earnestly. "My own father died when I was a mere boy—younger than Kittie is now—and for a time it seemed to me that life would never be the same to me again. One day in my reading I found these lines and they have always relieved the sting of that early grief just a little."

"Such a view robs death of much of its horror and I would gladly think of it so," Virginia said. "When I see the peaceful look on Uncle's Marion's face and remember how long it had been drawn and distorted with pain, I cannot but feel that he has indeed found peace and rest where he has gone."

"Do you know, Virginia, I have thought so many times to-day how glad and thankful I am that I came to Atlanta instead of returning to the Army of the Potomac."

It was only lately that Philip had taken to calling her by her first name now and then and it always brought a ripple of delight into her heart. For a moment she could not trust herself to reply and then, looking up at him with all the candor of her soul in her eyes, she answered gratefully, "We could never have gone through all this without you, Captain Blair."

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"I realize what a burden it would have been for *you*, for much of it you must have borne quite alone. The idea of coming here was purely a selfish one on my part. When I awoke to consciousness in Tennessee and learned that you had gone, an unconquerable longing to see you again filled my heart, and for that purpose I determined to come here with General Sherman's army. Now, I feel almost as if an unseen fate had led me here to help you."

Virginia was working nervously with a bunch of refractory blossoms. A wild desire possessed her to throw discretion to the winds and yield her heart to the sweet influence of her affection for this man who had grown to be so large a part of her very existence, but it could not, must not be.

"Will you not look up at me, Virginia, and say something to me that will show me you care for what I say?" he pleaded earnestly.

Great tears that could not be restrained dropped upon the flowers in her hand, but she dashed them away and, raising her eyes to his face, said tremblingly:

"I am sorry, Captain Blair, that it must always be you to whom I show the weakest side of my character. Pardon this display. You have been very, very kind to us and we shall never forget it."

"Do not apologize, little woman. You are always right and admirable to me, no matter what you do. And besides, there is not one woman in a thousand that could go through what you have in the last few weeks as bravely as you have done it."

These words of sympathy wrought upon Virginia as a world of care and sorrow could not have done and, dropping upon a sofa, she laid her head on the arm and sobbed like a heart-broken child, while Philip sat near her with a look of helpless distress in his face. At length,

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reaching out his great, strong hand, he tenderly stroked the waves of dark hair, saying:

"Poor little woman! You're tired and worn from the long strain of sorrow and responsibility. God knows how gladly I would take the burden all upon myself if I could. I have many things to say to you sometime but not just now. A happier day will dawn for us all ere long and then we shall see what the future holds for us."

Even in the midst of her weeping the young girl's heart beat high with happiness as she listened to the note of tenderness in Philip's voice and realized the meaning of his words; not even the recollection of her promise to Hugh could wholly mar the sweetness of the thought that Philip loved her.

Raising her head at last, she smiled through her tears and said, "It's over now. You must not pity me any more. It makes me cry quicker than scolding would, a great deal."

"As if anyone would dare to scold you, Virginia," Philip said, smiling back at her with pure pleasure at the relief the tears had brought her.

A moment later the watchers came and took their stations for the night and Philip returned to quarters for the rest which he sadly needed after a day of constant labor and anxiety.

But what may a soldier expect of rest or ease or comfort? A messenger awaited Captain Blair with an order that he should report to General Sherman as soon as he returned. Without stopping a moment, Philip hurried to headquarters and presented himself before his commander.

The general glanced up from his writing as Blair entered the apartment and, laying aside his pen, he eyed the young man narrowly before he said, "Blair, I want a man to go to Washington for me on a private errand."

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Philip waited an instant for General Sherman to continue, but, seeing he had no intention of doing so, he asked, "Do you mean you wish me to be that man?"

"Of course that's what I mean. Why else do you suppose I sent for you? Will you go?"

"My first duty is to my commander, sir. You do me much honor in reposing so much confidence in me."

"Are you willing to go?" General Sherman demanded.

"Yes, sir, I am always willing to obey your orders."

"After all the trouble of obtaining permission to come with us you are willing to turn back and leave the journey scarcely begun?" the General said.

"If you require it of me, yes, sir."

"That's the spirit of a good soldier, Blair. Prepare to go at once."

"How soon must I leave, sir?"

"As soon as possible—within the next three days at the latest. There are prisoners to be sent north and they may as well go at the same time. You can have charge of them to Indianapolis."

"Set your own time, sir," Philip answered.

"Say, Thursday morning, then?" General Sherman said with a rising inflection.

"Very well, Thursday morning," Philip replied.

"Come to me to-morrow evening for your instructions." As Sherman said this he signified Blair's dismissal by taking up his pen to resume the letter he was writing.

Before Philip could quit his presence, however, he paused to ask in an absent-minded way, "Has anything been done about the case you referred to me yesterday?"

"The Colonel is dead, sir," Philip said simply.

"Ah! the Colonel is dead. Well, inasmuch as it had to be, 'tis better so. It modifies the situation. The ladies can now be removed within the ten days," and again he returned to his writing.

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Philip hesitated. A new idea had come to him. "If you please, General, may I speak with you a moment longer?" he asked.

Sherman finished his sentence. "Well, what is it?" he said.

"Could you allow me to take the ladies under my protection when I go north?" Blair asked hesitatingly.

"Why, I don't know," General Sherman said as if considering the question. "Perhaps you might. I have granted similar privileges to others, I see no reason why I may not do as much for you. Where will they go?"

"To Richmond, sir, and I could accompany them a part of the way."

"Well, well, arrange it if you can," the General replied, turning again to his desk.

Philip quietly withdrew and, when he reached his room, sat down to think upon the change that must be made in all his plans. It never for a moment occurred to him to question his duty. Three years of voluntary, faithful service in the Union army had taught him implicit obedience to the command of his superior. His only thought was for Virginia and her friends and he must try to adjust their course to meet this new demand upon his time.

He would persuade them, if possible, to go with him on Thursday to Chattanooga, where they could tarry long enough for him to make the trip to Indianapolis and return, after which he would accompany them as near to Richmond as he could go in safety.

The next day, as soon as Colonel Chester had been laid to rest and the family had returned to the desolate house, Philip laid before them the particulars of his plan for their removal. Mrs. Chester wept violently and declared she could not be induced to leave the house so soon, but a little reasoning on Virginia's part and coax-

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ing on Kittie's overcame her objections and the journey was decided upon. On the day appointed, they bade farewell to the scene of so much sorrow and took their way northward.

The evening before, Philip had visited General Sherman and received his instructions as to the business to be discharged. Before leaving his commander's presence, the young man said, "Am I expected to return here when I have accomplished this mission?"

"As you please about that, Blair," Sherman replied. "We shall probably leave the city before you can get back and if you find it necessary you can report for duty at your old post, although I regret to lose you. However, that can be arranged later on when we see how you get on with your commission."

"Very well, sir," Philip answered, "and before I leave you I wish to express my appreciation of the kindness you have shown me and of the honor I esteem it that you selected me to send upon this mission. Believe me, General Sherman, I shall answer with my life for its faithful accomplishment."

"Had I not full confidence in your ability and your faithfulness, be sure I should not have chosen you for an errand like this. I hope you will despatch the business quickly and return to us if possible," the General said as he gave Philip a warm hand grasp at parting.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

IF Philip Blair deplored the horrors of the civil strife as seen in the camp, along the march or on the field of battle, how much more was he shocked, when he entered the prison grounds, by the scenes he witnessed there. The place was barren, cheerless, desolate, the men half clothed, half fed, and many of them wasted by disease brought on by exposure to the rigors of a northern climate such as they had never known before.

"This is awful!" Blair said to his companion, "and yet they say it is infinitely better than our men are enduring in the prisons of the south."

"Yes, I have talked with men from the pen at Andersonville and if their descriptions are not exaggerated beyond all reason, this is paradise beside it."

"In the name of God, how long must it last?" Philip ejaculated with a shudder. "I am more and more convinced each day that Sherman is right in his determination to crush this thing and end it at whatever cost."

It was a warm, bright day, and many of the sick had dragged themselves out from their hard beds to lie along the banks of the rivulet which flowed through the prison yard and which, from the promptings of their homesick hearts, the inmates had christened the "Potomac." Beside this stream and following its course were the barracks, while a strip of ground on either side of it served as a sort of main street along which, in the early days, the venders came to cry their stock in trade and to distribute supplies of food at exorbitant prices to such of the prisoners as were fortunate enough or cunning enough to have a coin, a bit of jewelry or other valuable possession

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secreted from the vigilant eyes of the prison employees. Here, too, the captives passed back and forth from one rude shelter to another, crossing to their friends "on the other side" by means of an unstable bridge of planks laid carelessly across the stream.

As Philip walked slowly along this thoroughfare, his sympathy was especially aroused by a man whose apparent misery rendered him more pitiable, if possible, than any of his fellow sufferers. Turning to glance at the prisoner a second time, to see if haply he might speak a word of comfort or offer some deed of kindness, he fancied he caught a gleam of recognition in the pallid face.

"Yes, I'm the man," the prisoner said with a ghastly smile as Philip came a step nearer.

"You are what man?" Blair asked in surprise.

"Hugh Cunningham—the man you saved from death after Gettysburg," was the reply, spoken a trifle bitterly.

"Is it possible! And yet I can see the resemblance, now that you have told me who you are."

"I was grateful to you then," Cunningham said feebly, "but now it is scarcely a question whether a few hours of suffering and a peaceful end then would not have been better than this slow dying by degrees which I have endured for ten long months."

"Has the life here done all this for you?" Philip said kindly.

"Not quite all," Hugh replied. "I had been sick before I came here, but the exposure of last winter fastened the disease on me and I cannot throw it off. I suppose another winter here will do the work for me."

"Poor fellow!" Philip said pityingly, "I am sorry for you and I will see what can be done for you. I hear talk of an exchange of prisoners soon."

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"O, sir, do you mean you will try to get me out of here?" Hugh exclaimed, his voice trembling and his eyes filling with tears.

"Yes, I'll try," Philip answered, "but do not expect too much. You know the result of such an effort is very uncertain."

"I know, I know," Hugh answered joyfully, "but I can bear it better here, knowing that someone on the outside of this infernal place is trying to help me."

"Where is the negro who was with you at Gettysburg?"

"He is living in Indianapolis on an allowance made him from my own income, of which I cannot use a dollar."

"Why does he not help you?"

"He is not allowed to do so. Jerry is as faithful as ever and, for a time, came to my relief every day, but since the prison authorities deprived us of the privilege of buying extra supplies, either in food or other comforts, he can do nothing for me but wait until I die or someone rescues me from this."

"To what army do you belong?"

"The Army of Virginia."

"Very well," said Philip, making a brief entry in a note book, "I will not forget you."

The impulse came to him to say something of the Lees and Chesters, but, being pressed for time, he failed to do so. Indeed, amid the sad scenes of their recent association, Hugh's name had not been mentioned by any member of either family and Philip had almost ceased to connect him even with Kittie. Philip, without further comment, passed on to his inspection of the prison surroundings.

In the afternoon, his work at Camp Morton done, he

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took his way back to Chattanooga where Virginia Lee awaited him with mingled feelings of happiness, self-reproach and dread; of happiness, that she should see him once more, feel the touch of his hand and know the joy of his protecting care; of self-reproach, that she had permitted herself to deal unjustly with Hugh—poor Hugh, from whom she had not heard for so long—poor Hugh, whom she had never even mentioned to Philip Blair; sometimes she had tried to do so in a trivial, incidental way, but the words seemed to stick in her throat and she gave up the attempt, soothing her conscience by wondering why, after all, she should feel it necessary to speak of him—there was surely no occasion for her to go about talking to her acquaintances about her lover in the war, whom she had promised to marry; but especially at this time did she chide herself because she had permitted Philip to go directly from her presence to the place where Hugh was paying a dreadful penalty for carrying out her wishes, without one word of message or inquiry—she had even avoided speaking of Philip's destination to Mrs. Lee or Mrs. Chester or Kittie lest they might inadvertently refer to Hugh's presence there—they knew that Philip was going to the North with prisoners, and, further than this, they had been too much absorbed in their own affairs to ask; but most poignant of all emotions in Virginia's heart just now was dread of the inevitable day which must speedily come when Philip would not be coming back, when his good-bye would be final and she must face a life in which he would have no part.

Philip Blair, on the contrary, was troubled with no thought, as he sped along toward Chattanooga, save fond anticipation of the meeting with the woman he had learned to love with all the fervor of his warm heart. For him there was no bitterness of self-condemnation, no dread

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of last farewells. Already hope was daily speaking to him of better things a little farther on.

"The darkest hour, as the proverb goes,
Is the hour before the dawning."

Philip confidently believed this darkest hour was past, and, through the gloom and mists about him, he was beginning to discern the harbinger of day—the day of peace. He was content to wait now, for he wished no sense of gratitude or obligation to enter into the acceptance or rejection of his suit for Virginia's hand, nor did he feel it just to ask her to bind her young life to the uncertain fate of a soldier. But when peace came he would return to her and all would yet be well. With these thoughts in his heart, the train was all too slow that bore him onward toward the south. When he arrived in Chattanooga, he found his friends all ready to depart. They had spent the days of his absence in the village, although Mrs. Lee and Virginia had visited the plantation and had seen the Hudsons and the negroes who were yet there.

"Has anything been done there this year?" Philip asked as Virginia was talking of their visit at Lee's Summit.

"O, yes," she answered, "Hudson has done all that could be done considering the disadvantages with which he has had to contend. We cannot hope to see much accomplished there until father can come home to manage affairs himself, and even then the progress will be slow, for a plantation cannot be run without money and by the time the war is ended that commodity will be at a low ebb with us."

"Don't despair, Virginia," Mrs. Lee returned. "'The Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' you know, and we can surely claim to be of the class referred to."

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"I am not despondent," was the reply. "We shall at least have our land and father and a few faithful negroes and we can begin all over again with far better prospect of success than thousands of others."

"I should like to see the place again myself," Philip said. "There is time for us to drive out there and return before our train is due. Would you go with me, Virginia? The day is very fine."

The proposition was a surprise to Virginia and aroused contending impulses in her breast. She feared, yet longed, to go. The hours she would spend alone with Philip grew more precious to her as she saw the end of their association drawing near. A visit among the scenes where they had first known each other was an inviting prospect, but she feared the consequences of a few hours thus spent. She realized that each fond recollection would be an additional tie to bind her heart to Philip Blair.

"Why, I don't know, there is yet some packing to be done," she said in a feeble attempt to excuse herself.

"It doesn't amount to anything, daughter," her mother replied. "I can easily do it without you. Go, the sunlight and fresh air will do you good."

No great amount of urging was required for Virginia was eager to go and, had she not been so, it would have seemed most ungracious to deny Philip so simple a request.

Half an hour later Virginia, seated by Philip's side, was riding along a pleasant country road and in both their hearts there was that joy unspeakable which none but loving hearts can know. Everything about them was interesting and beautiful, the sky, the clouds, the sunlight, the fields, the hills, the mountains in the distance, and Philip was never so thoroughly admirable as he was to-

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day, Virginia thought. Perhaps it was because she had never seen him so thoroughly happy before, for there is nothing like true, pure happiness to bring out the very best and highest qualities of the human soul.

They ate their dinner at the Lodge. Mr. and Mrs. Hudson were delighted to receive them and to offer them the best entertainment their home afforded.

In the afternoon they wandered about the place for an hour or two, lingering longest in the summer-house where Virginia had always loved to go.

"I like to come here best of all," Philip said, seating himself beside the little table which still stood in its old place, "because it was here I found you when I came back that morning after the house was burned. I was very, very sorry for you that day, little woman."

"I was very, very wretched," Virginia replied.

"I hope you may never be quite so unhappy again."

"I scarcely dare to hope such a thing. Sometimes the outlook seems very dark."

"Don't feel so, Virginia. I believe the war will be over soon."

"I fear there is not much in store for us when the war is over," Virginia replied, looking out upon the spot where her home had stood. "I feel sometimes as if mother and I should stay right here and attend to the place as we did before. If the house were here, I should not hesitate to do it."

"No, no," Philip answered quickly. "You have had care enough here, you must go on to Richmond as we have planned."

Virginia looked at her companion with a smile of pleasure, surprised, yet gratified, by his assumption of authority.

"You need your father's protection now," he said, lay-

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ing his hand over hers as it rested on the table between them, "and when the war is over I'll come back to Richmond or Atlanta or Chattanooga or the other end of the world, if you should chance to be there, and then we'll settle the question, you and I, as to who shall be your protector during the remainder of your life."

Virginia tried to frame a suitable reply but no words would come to her. She sat like one dumb, staring at Philip with white, set face.

"Speak to me, Virginia," Philip pleaded. "Tell me, may I come back to you when the war is done? It is not asking much."

"Don't, Philip, don't. I cannot bear it!" Virginia exclaimed, bursting into tears.

"Say it again, little woman, say it again," Philip said, coming around to the side of the table where she sat. "You cannot know how I have wished to hear you call me 'Philip' instead of the everlasting 'Captain Blair' which grows so monotonous. Call me that again, darling, and tell me that when the war is over you want me to come back to you." Placing his hand under her chin, he turned the tear-stained face to his own.

"O, Philip," she said in agony, "you must know that I want you to come back to me, but it will only be for misery to us both."

"What do you mean? I do not understand you," he answered sternly.

"I mean there is a reason why we can never be more to each other than we are to-day—never *so much* again," she replied as if the words were torn from her.

"Tell me the reason, Virginia. Is it because I happened to be born in one state and you in another—because our opinions are different about a political question? You

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cannot mean to sacrifice your happiness and mine for a thing like that?" he exclaimed.

"No, no, no, it is not that," she moaned.

"Virginia, I have sometimes fancied that you returned my love, which I do not hesitate to declare to you, whatever the result may be. If you do, there is no power under heaven that shall separate us. Tell me truly, darling, am I right? Do you love me?" he pleaded.

Virginia sprang to her feet and stood before him with an air of sudden resolve.

"Philip," she said kindly, "I have no right to tell you that—no right to listen to what you are saying. I have promised to marry another man."

Philip staggered like a man who has been struck a heavy blow and, sinking into a chair, buried his face in his hands. He sat thus for a long time until Virginia approached him timidly and, laying her hand gently on his shoulder, said:

"Look up at me, Philip, and say you do not despise me. You can never know how earnestly I have tried to do right."

"Yes, I do know, little woman," Philip said, raising his head and taking the trembling hand in both his own. "I see it all now, why you have seemed to avoid me at times, why you sent me no message when I was wounded, and why you did not answer my letter last winter. It is I who have been to blame and I am only trying to think it all out and see if there is any way to remedy the mischief that has been done. Who is the man, Virginia?"

Even now Virginia could not quite bring herself to speak Hugh Cunningham's name. "He is an officer in the Confederate army and he has been my playmate from childhood. He is now in a Federal prison and he writes me that it is only the thought of me and my promise

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that enables him to endure his fate. And more than all else to me, is the fact that he went to the war in the first place to please me."

Virginia hoped Philip would guess the whole truth, but, so confident had he been of the attachment between Hugh and Kittie when he first met them at Lee's Summit, so boyish and heedless of the realities of life did Hugh seem as compared with Virginia who had always been womanly and mature beyond her years, that the idea of Hugh in the light of Virginia's lover had never entered his mind and did not now. Virginia's words recalled most vividly his recent visit in the prison, but it was only as an incident attesting the suffering of any prisoner of war, not as a crucial experience in his own life. He knew better, he thought, than Virginia did, what the absent soldier was enduring for her sake.

"I understand," he answered. "I have unwittingly helped to force this situation upon you and, God helping me, I will not add to the burden you must carry. When we part at Richmond, I will go away and leave you to forget this episode in your life as quickly as possible."

Virginia hid her face and sobbed helplessly for a moment, then, stretching out her hands, cried in utter despair:

"O, Philip, Philip, it breaks my heart to let you go, and yet I know I *must*."

Tenderly he drew her to his side and folded her in a close embrace, kissing her fondly again and again.

"Just this one time, darling, for the sake of what might have been, and then we'll bury this much of our lives here in the little summer-house with my dead hope. If the day should ever come when you are free, remember that away in the north Philip waits for you with faithful heart."

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And Virginia suffered his caresses with never a thought of those compunctions which had so beset her at the idea of allowing such privileges to Hugh. For a little while she wept silently on Philip's broad shoulder and then, withdrawing herself from his arms, she removed the traces of her grief as far as possible, glad to know that the ruined condition of her home would serve as sufficient excuse to the Hudsons for her tears.

"We must go now," she said sadly. "We have been here a long time and mother will be growing anxious."

The good-byes at the Lodge were soon spoken and they took their way back to the village in silence as mourners return from the sepulcher of their dead.

When he assisted her to alight, Philip held her hand for a moment while he said, "This is harder, almost, than to say good-bye and part forever, but we have both been learning to fight great battles successfully. Let us make this no exception."

Virginia looked into his face with a smile that was sadder than tears and, turning quickly, hastened into the house. She would begin again the old busy life that left no time for dreaming or repining.

The first part of the journey to Richmond was uneventful, but before they reached the station just outside the Confederate lines, where Philip had expected to leave them and take another train for Washington, they found the road to Richmond destroyed for many miles, by a recent raid. This necessitated a circuitous ride overland and, although it would take him far into the territory covered by the enemy, Philip determined to accompany them. To this the ladies all demurred, earnestly begging him not to incur such a risk for them.

"There will be no great risk and I shall feel much better satisfied to know you are safe on the last stage of

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your journey before I leave you," he insisted. "I will go in citizen's dress and shall probably never be molested."

Late in the evening he saw them aboard a train which would carry them directly to Richmond where Mr. Lee awaited them.

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE apartments in which the Lees and Chesters established themselves, though comfortable, were plain and unpretentious, for the time had come when they must *count the cost*, not for the sake of a surplus for the relief of the soldiers, but lest their stock of funds should be exhausted before opportunity was given to replenish it. There was a strange commingling of sentiment in the hearts of the little circle. Mr. Lee was rejoiced to have his family with him and found in his association with them a recompense for the anxiety and toil which had made up the routine of his daily life since he first came to the capital. To Mrs. Lee and Virginia, the sense of security was like a haven of rest to the mariner after a voyage upon a stormy sea. Even the precarious condition of the cause they had supported could not wholly overshadow the pleasure of their present freedom from responsibility.

Only the "skeleton" in Virginia's closet really disturbed her peace of mind. The destruction of her home, the loss of their fortune, the failure of the rebellion, could not grieve her longer. She had suffered too much to care for these things now, but when she thought of Philip and of Hugh and of the life the future had in store, her heart oftentimes misgave her and she shrank from the prospect before her.

Then, too, there were the mourning weeds of Mrs. Chester and Kittie always in evidence, like Banquo's ghost, to cast a shade of sadness upon them all. It is a gruesome custom, this, of draping ourselves in black to commemorate our dead, as if the world were not already

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full enough of sorrow, but we must daily lacerate our wounds afresh and call upon our friends to look and sympathize. A little more "remembering" and a little less "show of remembering" would make the world a truer, better world.

Two or three mornings after the arrival of the ladies from the south, the family were gathered in the little sitting-room for a quiet "after breakfast chat." Mr. Lee sat carelessly looking over the morning paper, in reality following chiefly the thread of the conversation going on.

"Umph!" he suddenly ejaculated as a startling headline caught his eye. "A spy to be executed at sunrise to-morrow morning," he read, adding by way of comment, "I had hoped and supposed we were through with all that."

Virginia's attention was arrested in the middle of a sentence she was addressing to her mother, a vague, inexplicable fear possessing her. She had not seen as much of this kind of thing as her father had and the sacrifice of a human life meant a great deal to her. It surprised her to see Mr. Lee turn heedlessly to another page of the paper without apparent interest in the unfortunate man.

"Read what it says about the spy, father," she said a trifle indignantly. "I wish they would not hang any more people."

Mr. Lee turned back to the article and read aloud:

.. "*A Spy to be Executed at Sunrise To-morrow Morning.*"

"A suspicious-looking character was captured by a band of soldiers Monday night. He was attired in citizen's dress and called himself Blair. He was carefully searched and papers concealed about his person prove him to be an officer in the Federal army. There was strong circumstantial evidence of his guilt and he was

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brought immediately to this city where he was duly tried on the above charge. Being found guilty, the death sentence was pronounced. He is now confined in *Libby prison* where he will remain until to-morrow morning at sunrise when he will pay the death penalty."

When Mr. Lee pronounced the name "Blair," Kittie sprang up in alarm and, running to his side, hung over him and followed the lines as he read, finally bursting into indignant tears. As the article was finished, she stamped her foot angrily, crying out:

"It's a burning shame! Captain Blair is no more a spy than you are, Uncle Thomas. Why don't you say something, Virginia?" turning resentfully upon her cousin who, pale as death, sat perfectly still, gazing vacantly at her father's face.

"What *can* we do, father?" Virginia asked mechanically when thus appealed to.

"I don't know, daughter. It may be this is not Philip Blair at all, you know. There are many Blairs," Mr. Lee answered thoughtfully.

"Yes, it is Philip Blair," Virginia replied. "I knew it when you read the headline and I almost believe I have known it since we left him Monday evening. I had a feeling that something was wrong."

"Don't talk so, Virginia," Mrs. Lee interrupted. "You were never superstitious. Even if this should be our Captain Blair I suppose it will only be necessary for your father to tell the authorities of their mistake."

"You little know the authorities and their unchangeable decrees, Margaret," Mr. Lee said with a kind glance at his wife, "but I will see what can be done," he added, rising and making preparations to leave the house.

"*See what can be done!*" Virginia exclaimed, jumping up as if suddenly recovering her powers of mind and

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body. "Why, father, Philip Blair's life must be saved if it takes a panic in the city of Richmond to do it."

"You'd scarcely be able to stir up a mob in the city of Richmond to interfere in a case like this, Virginia. I will go at once to the President. I believe I can accomplish more through him than any other way."

"Please be as quick about it as possible, father. If this does not succeed, we must try some other plan. The time is very short between now and to-morrow morning. You will report the result of your effort at once, of course?"

"Yes, I'll be back directly," Mr. Lee replied as he hurried away.

As soon as her father was gone, Virginia went to her room, returning in a little while dressed for walking.

"Where are *you* going, Virginia?" Mrs. Lee asked in surprise.

"When father comes I am going to the prison to see Philip Blair," was the reply.

"O, no, Virginia, it will never do," Mrs. Lee remonstrated with a shudder. "Your father will never permit it. It is no place for a woman."

"Nor for a man like Philip Blair," Virginia answered quickly. "I am going there to let him see that he is not forsaken in his misery. It is as little as I can do after all he has done for us."

"You're right, Virginia," Kittie exclaimed in a tone of admiration, "and I'd gladly go with you if it would add to his pleasure the least bit, but it wouldn't. There is nothing on earth that would comfort him now like the sight of you and uncle in his cell."

Virginia glanced for a moment at her mother's face, but Mrs. Lee was too intent upon her own view of the case to notice Kittie's prattle.

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"It is all right for your father, dear, and of course he will go, but Captain Blair would not expect you there or wish you to come," she urged.

"It's useless, mother, to contend with me about it. I'm sorry to disregard your wishes, but I should never have any peace of mind again if I shirked such a duty as this," Virginia answered.

Mr. Lee did not return at once. Two hours elapsed before he appeared and Virginia was fast losing hope of his success. When he reached the house his face wore an anxious, troubled look.

"I have not accomplished anything," he said. "President Davis does not wish to interfere. He says the men who know the circumstances are better able to judge as to the facts of a case like this than he is, and he hesitates to take it into his own hands. He thinks very likely the man in the prison is not our Captain Blair at all."

"The man in the prison is *our* Captain Blair," Virginia answered, putting on her hat, "but we will not stop to speculate about that question when we can satisfy ourselves in a short time by going to the prison to see who he is."

"*You* are not going there," Mr. Lee said sternly.

"Yes, *I* am going there," Virginia replied very emphatically.

"Why, daughter, it is preposterous. I myself will go at once and I can ascertain as well as you can who the man is."

"Father, shall we waste time quibbling over nothing when a man's life is at stake?" and opening the door, Virginia stepped resolutely out upon the porch. Mr. Lee followed her reluctantly, saying kindly:

"Of course, if you will go, I must accompany you, but I do not approve of it at all."

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As they entered the prison door both father and daughter were amazed by the sight which met their view. Wretched, miserable, despairing, in want of everything that renders human life preferable to that of the vagrant dog, gaunt faces told their own tale of hunger, exposure, homesickness and disease.

"My God!" Mr. Lee said solemnly. "And we wonder why our cause has failed. If there is a God in heaven he will avenge a national crime like this."

It was the first time he had ever been inside the walls; he had heard rumors of the privation, neglect and cruelty suffered by the captives but he had not imagined such a state as he now beheld.

Virginia was well-nigh stifled by the foul air and vile mixture of offensive odors that met her. She clung tremblingly to her father's arm, looking with timid awe upon the uncanny creatures about her. With long beards and matted, unshorn hair, their lean, lank bodies but partially concealed by filthy rags, these effigies of men turned in simple wonder from their idleness to gaze upon a manly man and a beautiful woman from the outside world which had become to them only a vacant dream of the past.

"This way," the guide said, motioning Mr. Lee to follow him, and Virginia saw with shrinking fear that they must traverse at least a portion of the loathsome den to reach the object of their search.

"We always keep this kind in a remote and well-guarded part of the building," said the fellow, who was garrulous and coarse beyond description. "He's most too grand and lordly with his high head and fine airs. He needs to be spirit broke like these fellows you see here. But he'll get it broke to-morrow!" and he chuckled to himself as if gloating over the prospect of a rare treat.

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Virginia felt as if her blood were being congealed with horror as she listened to this villain and picked her way through the filth and garbage with which the floors were strewn, thinking constantly of what a man like Philip Blair must suffer to be incarcerated in such a place.

At length when they had reached the darkest and dirtiest portion of the house, the guide unlocked a door and threw it open, standing back with a revolver in his hand, more for the intimidation of the inmates of the cell than to guard against any real danger of an attempt to escape upon their part.

As the door opened, there was a cessation of the oaths and hilarity which were being freely indulged in by a crowd of hungry looking men gathered about a small table where four of their number were engaged in a game of cards.

Virginia paused a moment, thinking some mistake had been made.

"Go on," the guide said, "he's in there but he's too proud to mix even with his own comrades."

The young girl crossed the threshold hesitatingly and the rays of light from the one dingy window falling upon her face so blinded her for a moment that she did not discern the tall form of her lover in the shadows of a remote corner. Philip Blair stood with head erect and arms folded, his soul filled with loathing and contempt by his surroundings. As his eye fell upon the apparition at the door he seemed transfixed with horror.

"Why are *you here*, Virginia Lee?" he said sternly.

"I came to help and rescue you, Captain Blair," she said, advancing toward him with her hand outstretched in greeting.

Blair receded as the girl approached, saying in a tone

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of entreaty, "Do not come near me, Miss Lee. The touch of him who enters here is pollution to a hand like yours."

Virginia hastened to his side and laid her hand gently upon his arm which he still held resolutely folded, while his face did not for a moment relax its rigid expression of disapproval.

"You are the same Philip to me you were in the little summer-house at home," the sweet voice said in a tone too low for any ear but his.

A look of adoration crept into Philip's face. Unclasping his arms, he took the hand in his and, bending his proud head, said fondly, "Don't tempt me, little woman, above what I am able to bear."

Virginia answered with a loving smile and a warm pressure of the hand, then, leading him toward her father who had paused a few feet from them, she said:

"Father, you have not forgotten our friend, Captain Blair?"

"I am very glad to meet you, Captain Blair. I am under great obligation to you for your kindness to my family and I am most sorry to see you in a situation like this."

"Thank you, sir. It is something to know I have the sympathy of honorable people. As to the obligation, it rests upon me for the privilege I have had of being of service to your wife and daughter," Blair answered courteously.

"We have not time to inquire now how all this came about. You may be sure we shall do all in our power to avert the fate that threatens you," Mr. Lee said.

"We *will* save you, Captain Blair, though the heavens fall!" Virginia exclaimed earnestly. "We came here that we might be able to assure others that we are not mistaken

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in the man. When we come back to you it will be to release you from this place."

"The knowledge of your effort will at least be a consolation to me in the hour of my supreme trial," the young man answered, looking steadily at Virginia as he spoke. Tears sprang to her eyes, but she dashed them away and turned to leave the room. Before she reached the door, one of the men arose from the card table and stood before her.

"Why should there be so much ado about the fate of this man?" he said. "It is infinitely better than to endure what we have suffered here for months and some of us for years."

"Amen," Philip said fervently.

"We were as manly and proud as he when we were brought to this infernal place and it would be better to die thus than live to degenerate into beasts."

"Stand aside!" the guide interposed, leveling his revolver at the wretch. The way was cleared and Virginia and Mr. Lee, with saddened hearts, passed out of the cell, retraced their steps through the building and emerged once more into the world of sunlight.

"Now, father, take me to President Davis and we'll see what I can do, now that I can assure him of Captain Blair's identity and his innocence," Virginia directed calmly.

"You must not walk, Virginia. You will be worn out. Come over to this shady nook across the way and sit there until I can procure a conveyance."

A cab was speedily obtained and Mr. Lee and his daughter were driven rapidly to the capitol. When they arrived there they were informed that a message came for the President immediately after Mr. Lee parted from him in the morning, whereupon he had left the building,

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saying he was going home. Following Mr. Davis to his residence, they found that he had gone out of the city more than an hour before and would not return until late the next day. Mr. Lee stood holding the door of the carriage for several minutes, uncertain as to what course they should pursue.

"I believe, daughter, I'll take you home now and we can get something to eat. Then, while you rest, I'll go to the prison and get the names of the officers who tried and sentenced Captain Blair and see if I can move them to retract," Mr. Lee said this as he looked at his watch and found it already after noon.

"I am not hungry and I cannot bear to rest, but I know of nothing better to suggest—at least not until I have thought about it a little."

Mr. Lee again seated himself in the cab, directing the driver to take them to their own number. As soon as he had eaten his lunch, he returned to the prison, but there was no satisfaction to be obtained there. The prisoner had been fairly tried by responsible, *honorable* men, he was informed, he had been found guilty and condemned to die. The men had then gone on to other duties and left the hang-man and the prison guards to execute the penalty upon the prisoner. It only remained for them to do their duty.

In the meantime, a bold scheme had been forming itself in Virginia's mind, to be carried out if her father's present expedition failed, as she somehow felt it would. As soon as he returned and reported the result of his effort, without waiting to hear the particulars, she asked abruptly:

"When does the next train leave for Petersburg?"

Mr. Lee consulted his watch. "In half an hour," he answered.

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"Call a cab, father, and let us go over there to General Lee. I have great faith in him, I do not believe he would be a party to a crime. We can return by the late train to-night," Virginia said in great excitement.

"But, daughter, what——"

"Don't stop to ask me now, father, or we shall miss that train. Trust me when I tell you I have thought of another plan to try and I can tell you about it on the journey over."

Mr. Lee followed the instructions with many misgivings, but the case was such a desperate one he hesitated to question any proposition that might be made. On the way to Petersburg, where General Lee was known to be in camp, Virginia explained the details of her plan.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE General is not here to-day, sir," a soldier said in reply to Mr. Lee's inquiry at the Petersburg camp.

"Where is he?" asked Virginia, grown restive under the deliberation with which her father was inclined to prosecute their mission.

"He went to a camp six miles from here with the President who came from the city this morning," was the reply.

"Can you direct us how to find him?" the young lady asked.

"Yes, I can direct you but the way is a rough one."

"It doesn't matter. We must reach him," Virginia answered.

Mr. Lee looked at his watch and hesitated. "It will be a close race, daughter, to go there, interview the General and return in time for the last train in to-night," Mr. Lee said.

"Then there is all the more reason for losing no time," she replied.

The soldier began hurriedly giving directions as to the road.

"I know," the driver interrupted. "I know whar de camp is an' de way to git dar."

"Then take us there as fast as possible," Mr. Lee directed, resuming his seat beside his daughter.

When they reached their destination they were informed that the General was engaged and was receiving no one.

"But we *must* be received." Virginia exclaimed in dismay.

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"Go to him and tell him we have come all the way from Richmond on a matter of great importance and we will detain him but a short time," Mr. Lee said earnestly.

"I hesitate to do so, sir, for I am confident you will not be admitted, but I'll try," the soldier answered as he departed with the message. Returning in a few minutes, he said,

"General Lee is in consultation with the President and they refuse to see anyone now. A few hours hence he will receive you."

"A few hours hence will be too late. Father have you a pencil and some paper?" Virginia said.

Mr. Lee produced a pencil from his pocket and tore a leaf from a memorandum book. Virginia took them and wrote hurriedly,

"A woman waits to see you on a matter of life and death. As you honor womanhood, as you regard humanity, as you fear God, I ask you to receive me. A delay of a few hours will be fatal.

VIRGINIA LEE."

The General read the note aloud when it was handed to him.

"Virginia Lee," he repeated. "I never heard of her before."

"It is the business of the spy again, I suppose," the President said, a trifle impatiently.

"It is a strong appeal," General Lee said, thoughtfully. "I believe I should receive her. Tell her to come in," he added, turning to the messenger who awaited his order.

When the visitors entered the room they walked directly to the two men. "President Davis, permit me to introduce my daughter," Mr. Lee said, proudly.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting Miss Lee before,"

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the President replied, his face losing something of its sternness as he arose to receive her.

"General Lee, my daughter," the father said, turning to the commander-in-chief.

"What is it so urgent that the daughter of my kinsman has to say to me?" the General asked, as he took Virginia's hand in acknowledgment of the introduction.

The young girl's heart was reassured by the kind voice and beneficent countenance of the southern hero. Her mind flew back to those early days of the war when her whole soul was filled with admiration for the men who stood at the head of the Confederacy and its armies—Davis, Lee, Jackson, Bragg, and a long list of others. Here at last, almost in the end of the struggle, when her calmer judgment had been won from the old fanatical devotion to the cause, she had found the ideal hero of her dreams. Regaining her self-possession, she felt that to this nobleman she could pour out the real thoughts and feelings of her heart, and he would listen with justice and mercy to her appeal.

In answer to the General's salutation, Virginia handed him a paper. "Read that," she said, indicating the article referring to the spy. The commander glanced at the headline, and, dropping the paper to his side, looked steadily at her as he said:

"I read it in my morning paper."

Without shrinking from his gaze, Virginia returned it with a look of honesty and candor that no one could doubt. "I came here to tell you that the man condemned to die is not a spy but came within our lines as the escort and protector of four Confederate women, of whom I myself was one."

"Who were the other three?"

"My mother, my aunt, and her daughter."

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"Tell me the circumstances."

Briefly Virginia related their recent connection with Philip Blair from her uncle's illness and death to the drive overland to reach Richmond. "Captain Blair had no intention of coming into our territory," she explained, "but when we found the railroad had been destroyed he refused to leave us to make such a trip alone. He wore citizen's clothing instead of the Federal uniform that he might attract as little attention as possible. On his return trip he was captured by our men with the result you see here."

General Lee regarded the speaker kindly for a moment, then raising the paper which he still held at his side, he glanced hurriedly at the article once more. "It is a most unfortunate affair," he said, resuming his study of Virginia's face. "What is it you wish me to do—to pardon him?"

"No, sir," she answered, a little haughtily. "I wish you to forbid his execution and demand his release."

A momentary flash of pleasure passed over the commander's countenance as he observed the readiness with which the girl made the happy turn upon his form of language.

"Have it that way if you prefer it so," he answered, kindly. "It amounts to the same thing." As he spoke, the care-worn, absent look came back into his face, and, turning from his auditors, he walked briskly back and forth several times, his hands, in which he still held the paper, clasped behind him and his head bent down as if engaged in intent thought.

"You place me in a trying position, young lady," he said, suddenly, pausing before Virginia. "I have no doubt you have full confidence in what you say and it may be the whole truth. In that case, it would be

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deplorable to let the man die. On the other hand, you might so easily have been deceived; the man might have done all you say and still have had ulterior plans and motives of which you knew nothing, and, that being true, as the guardian of our people's safety, I could not set him free."

Virginia's face grew deathly pale as he proceeded, and, for a moment, she could think of no words for reply. The fear that he might, after all, deny her request seemed to paralyze her senses. Before she had recovered her self-possession, General Lee turned to Mr. Davis, saying:

"Do you know anything of the facts in this matter, Mr. President?"

"Nothing whatever," was the terse response.

"What is your opinion?" the General persisted.

"I have no opinion. I have heretofore refrained from interfering with affairs of this sort. It is reasonable to suppose the men who have these things in hand know more about them than we who have so little connection with them. In the present crisis we cannot afford to take any risks."

"In the *present crisis*, Mr. President, we cannot afford to withhold justice and mercy from our fellowmen."

A sudden, almost imperceptible flush passed over the President's face as Virginia spoke these words, but otherwise he gave them no apparent heed, and turned to the perusal of his papers as if dismissing the subject from his mind.

"I began my part in this conflict with a clear conscience before God, Virginia Lee," the General said, in reply. "I have maintained it in the same spirit and I shall continue to do so while there is a vestige of hope of our success. As God hears me, if I know my own heart I

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have no other wish than to do right in this as in every act of my life, regardless of what the result may be a few months hence." General Lee spoke with a kindly fervor that could not but win the respect and love of those who heard him.

"I believe it, sir, and for this reason I dare implore you to perform this righteous act," Virginia exclaimed, falling upon her knees and holding out her hands in supplication to the commander-in-chief. "The man for whom I plead is no *spy*. He is not only an honorable gentleman but a follower of Him who said, 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these ye did it unto me.' In these words He is on trial before you to-day. You cannot wash your hands of His blood as did Pilate of old. The life of Philip Blair hangs in the balance. If you let him die his blood will be upon you and upon your children. It is not an honorable execution that is designed, but murder, foul, premeditated murder."

The face of General Lee was a study as he listened to this despairing cry, and when it ceased he walked back and forth as before, this time with measured tread and anxious, clouded brow.

"What is this man to you that you should plead for him like this?" he suddenly demanded, stopping before the kneeling girl.

For an instant Virginia bowed her head, then, quickly raising it again, darted a swift glance at her father's face, turned full upon her inquisitor, and, undaunted by his piercing gaze, replied:

"He is the man I love."

A change came over the commander's face, and Thomas Lee, shocked and alarmed by the daring words, was not able to fathom its portent. He scarcely knew which to fear most, the scorn and contempt of his chief,

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which would fall unsparingly upon himself and Virginia, or the resentment which would defeat the very purpose of their visit here. It was a mistaken fear. "All the world loves a lover," and the heart of the most illustrious southerner since the days when the Old Dominion was called the "Mother of Presidents" was no exception. He looked thoughtfully into Virginia's face for a moment while he weighed the generous impulse her words aroused. President Davis, who, for some time, had heard the conversation in silence, said, with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice:

"You ask us, then, to pardon a Federal officer who has helped to ruin our land, that he may be spared to rob us, later on, of one of our brightest jewels in the person of Miss Virginia Lee?"

"Ah! no. Would to God it might be so." Virginia answered, reverently. "So far is such an expectation removed from me, that when we parted, less than a week ago, I never hoped to see his face again. I have promised to marry an officer in our own army, and the daughter of a Lee can never break her promise."

"Nor can a Lee refuse to perform a just and merciful deed. Arise, Virginia Lee," the General said, approaching her and extending his hand. "You have won a hard-fought battle, and Captain Blair shall go free."

Virginia could restrain her pent-up feelings no longer, and a flood of tears coursed down her cheeks as she lifted the hand caressingly to her lips.

"Some time I'll try to thank you. I cannot do it now," she said, in a joyous, faltering tone.

"There is no need, a good deed brings its own reward," the General replied.

Hurriedly he wrote upon a sheet of paper:

"The undersigned herewith forbid the execution of

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Philip Blair, the so-called spy, and command his immediate release from the prison at Richmond, Va. Under this, he must also have safe passage through the territory commanded by the Army of Virginia.

(Signed) ROBERT E. LEE."

"Mr. President, will you sign this order with me?" General Lee asked, laying the paper before Mr. Davis and pointing to the line immediately above his own name, which he had purposely left blank.

"I suppose I may as well," was the rather ungracious reply, and the name of the chief magistrate was duly affixed to the precious paper.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

FOR hours after the visit of Virginia and her father in the prison cell, Philip Blair was like a different man. Cheered by the sight of the beloved face and softened by the evidence of an affection strong enough to follow him even into this fathomless abyss of misery and degradation, his manner lost much of its haughtiness toward his fellow prisoners; scorn and contempt gave place to his natural inclination to pity and sympathy, and, ere long, he found himself speaking a friendly word to one or another of the men, or even engaging now and then in a brief conversation with Lieutenant Sims, the man who had spoken to Virginia at the door and who seemed to have retained more of his original manliness and respectability than any of his companions.

Hope was burning brightly in Philip's soul in spite of his continued effort to keep in mind his perilous situation. Sims saw this unnatural elation and pitied the condemned man with all the feeble power remaining after the blighting and benumbing influence of two years of utter wretchedness.

"Don't work yourself up too much over the hope of gettin' out of the clutches of these fiends, Captain Blair," Sims said, in the course of the afternoon. "If the men who brought you here was willin' to listen to justice and mercy, there might be some chance for you, but they're not. They're lookin' for Union men to work their vengeance on and they are not carin' much for the right or wrong of what they do."

"I realize the truth of what you say, Sims, and if my only chance lay with the men that captured me and the

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men I see about this den, I should have no hope; but Mr. Lee is a man of high standing here, and if I am rescued at all it must be through his influence with the better class of Confederate officers," Blair replied.

"There's a bare possibility that he might do it. I don't want to discourage you. If your friends succeed, you're a lot more fortunate than us poor devils that seem to have no friends either in the North or in the South," was the dejected response.

"Keep up as good courage as you can, Sims," Philip said, "I believe the end is drawing near. This struggle cannot be maintained in the South much longer."

"What do you mean by 'drawing near'—a month off or a year or what?" asked Sims.

"Well, say six months. It will take that long, perhaps, for our generals to accomplish what they have planned to do," Blair answered.

"Six months!" Sims repeated, looking about him in despair. "How would you like the prospect of six months in this place, Blair?"

"It's bad enough," Blair said, "but having endured it two years you must not give up now with freedom just in sight."

After this Sims fell into a fit of musing, and Philip walked over to the dingy little window, as he had done many times during the afternoon, and stood watching the shadows as they slowly climbed the buildings across the way, wondering what fate would befall him before the morrow's sun was sinking in the west. The time came at length when the last rays of sunlight were gone, and still no tidings came from Virginia, and a vague unrest crept into Philip's manner. For a long while he would not allow himself to question the hope by which he had been sustained throughout the day; but as the

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shadows gathered in the corners of the buildings and darkness settled even upon the narrow street, his courage failed him. Virginia had not succeeded, he said to himself, she had promised more than she was able to carry out—she had not known before the heartlessness and injustice in the world—she had judged others according to her own sense of honor, a lamentable mistake.

But why had she not returned? With the question, his sinking hope revived. When thoroughly convinced there was no possible hope for him, she would come back to him. Of this he had no doubt. She was too good and true to forsake him utterly in the hour of his greatest need. All through the night he was buoyed up by this hope. There was no sleep nor rest for him in this horrible uncertainty and dread.

He watched the rising of the moon and saw it glide slowly through the heavens, having only its progress to mark the passing hours of night. The same moon looked down upon the stately home in Rochester where slept his lady mother, peacefully unconscious of the tragic fate awaiting her only son—and he marvelled that in an hour of such agony there is not some unseen power of communion between hearts united by a love like theirs. He thought of his sister and the sorrow she would feel at his unhappy and untimely death; he thought of General Sherman, and a pang of keenest mortification and regret shot through his heart as he remembered that he must lose, in part, the confidence and esteem of his revered chief, for he would be censured, he knew, and with just cause, from the General's point of view, for having gone within the enemy's lines. But what would be to him the praise or censure of mortal man two hours hence, he thought, as he observed the first faint glimmering of dawn in the eastern sky. Involuntarily there

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came into his mind lines he had so often repeated in happier days—

“Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again.”

The words brought vividly to his memory the last time he had spoken them—to Virginia, by the side of Colonel Chester’s coffin.

“Oh! if Virginia would only come,” he thought, were it but to let him see her face once more and bid her a last good-bye, and leave with her those messages he must entrust to someone. And then he looked at Lieutenant Sims, dimly visible on his narrow, comfortless couch in the corner of the room—Sims, who had watched with him until sleep overcame the last sluggish powers of mind and body and had then retired, insisting that ’twas but for a little while and he would arouse and keep with Philip the lonely vigil through the night. Yes, he could leave his messages with Sims if no one else came to whom he could confide them—to his mother, his sister, and to General Sherman—and Virginia, too, to tell her that he had not doubted her but had believed unto the end that some unavoidable delay had kept her from his side. And now the brightness of early morning shone upon the earth, he began to hear the noise of hurrying steps and the rattling carts in the streets below and even the echo of voices within the prison walls.

O, God! must he, after all, suffer the ignominy and shame pronounced upon him! He had not known until now how much he had builded upon the hope of being rescued. One moment he gave himself to earnest prayer for strength and manly courage, and then, turning, woke

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the sleeping Sims to charge him with his last farewell to friends and loved ones. Philip drew himself up to his full height and threw his head back proudly as of old, but there was a quaver in his voice as he pronounced the solemn words; then, bidding Sims good-bye, he turned to face the jailers as they threw open the door of the cell. Slowly and in silence he walked between his guards until he stepped outside the door of the prison, then, drawing a deep, full breath, he ejaculated fervently:

"Thank God! for a breath of pure air once more."

"Your God seems to have gone a-visiting to-day," one of the men said with a harsh, disgusting laugh.

Philip ignored the sacrilege and waited with scornful pride for the signal to move on.

In the meantime, what had become of the Lees and the hard-earned document that could save Captain Blair from an ignominious death?

They had been so long detained in the interview with General Lee that less than half the time remained for the journey back to Petersburg it had taken to come out.

"I don' know, suh, I'll try," the driver said when asked if he could make the trip in time for the last train into the city.

And he did try, urging his horses on as fast as possible over the miserable roads they had to travel. It could not be done. The train had been gone more than half an hour when the carriage entered the town.

"I's sorry, Miss, but I don' de bes' I could," the darky said.

"I think you did, and we have no complaint to make of you," Mr. Lee answered for Virginia, who sat like one dazed, looking helplessly at her father's face by the light of the full moon which had just risen above the tree-tops.

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"We cannot let Captain Blair die with a paper in our possession that will set him free," she said at last. Then turning to the negro, she asked, "Could you drive us to Richmond before sunrise to-morrow morning?"

"I dunno, Miss, I kin try, but I'll haf t' git an'oer team. Dis heah is no ways fit fo' de likes o' dat an' dey's done 'bout all dey kin a'ready."

"Virginia, do you think you can endure such a drive as that after all you have gone through to-day? Stay here to-night and let me go on to Richmond with the reprieve," Mr. Lee insisted.

"No, no," was the hasty reply. "I could not trust that paper to anyone's care but my own. Besides, I could not rest if I stayed here. Go change your horses and get us more wraps and lose as little time as possible," she said to the driver.

"If money is the consideration, you shall have whatever price you ask," Mr. Lee added as an incentive to the negro to do his best.

It was near midnight before they were started on their long journey, much of which must be made over roads which were, as the driver told them, "mazin' bad." The motion of the carriage as it sped swiftly along over the first few miles where the roads were good, had a soothing effect on Virginia and gradually her head drooped until it rested on her father's shoulder and she slept. Mr. Lee was so pleased to see her take the needed rest that he scarcely moved lest he should disturb her. After a while the pace was slackened and the change of motion woke the sleeping girl. She looked about her vacantly for a moment and then called sharply to the negro:

"Drive faster, can't you, we'll never get there at this rate."

"Yes, Miss, I thinks we gits dar 'nless we has a acci-

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dent. I's only givin' 'em a breathin' spell over dis rough place. We'll be goin' fas' agin bymeby."

True to his promise, a few minutes later he whistled his horses into a trot which they kept up for several miles.

Virginia did not sleep again but sat through the long hours gazing out upon the scenes they passed. She watched the moon, as Philip did, rise slowly to the zenith and as slowly descend through the western sky. She noticed the fields and the dark, dense woods that sometimes bordered the road along which they traveled, but she was interested most of all in the houses sleeping in the moonlight, wondering as one by one the carriage rolled on and left them in the distance, what manner of people were within and whether they had ever felt the bitterness of a dumb, aching fear lest a dire calamity befall someone they loved.

As the night wore on and she realized they were fast traversing the latter half of their journey, she ceased to fret anxiously over their rate of speed and gave herself up to these half-sleeping meditations. She was violently awakened from such a reverie as the carriage lunged suddenly into a deep ditch which ran across the road, and rolled over on the side. The three occupants were thrown out upon the ground while the horses, frightened by the unwonted commotion, reared and plunged, attempting to run, dragging the overturned vehicle behind them. In an instant the negro, who was not hurt, was on his feet and, springing to the horses' heads, was talking to them in a reassuring voice that quickly quieted them.

As soon as Mr. Lee recovered himself, he hurried to Virginia, but she had already risen and said in answer to his anxious inquiries, "No, I am all right. See to the carriage. Shall we be able to go on?"

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"Is you hu't, Marse Lee?" the darky asked in a frightened voice.

"No, we are not hurt but we have had a dreadful shaking up. How did this happen?"

"Dunno, Marse Lee. I nevah run into a ditch like dat befo'. 'Spose 'twas kase I's gwine so fas'," the driver explained.

Together Mr. Lee and the negro unhitched the team and turned the carriage upright once more.

"What has happened?" Virginia asked in great alarm. "Is the carriage broken?"

"We cannot tell yet," her father replied. "Bill, do you find anything wrong?" he inquired of the negro who was hastily examining the vehicle.

"Yes, suh, de tongue is broke but mebbly we kin fix it wid dis yere strop."

Mr. Lee went to investigate and for a time believed they would be able to repair the accident, but, finding it impossible, he said, "It will not do, Bill, to try to go on with a death-trap like this."

"No, suh, it won't do," Bill answered in a disappointed tone.

"O, what can we do now? We *must* get to Richmond," Virginia said excitedly.

"How far are we from the city, Bill?" Mr. Lee inquired.

"Bettah'n fo' mile, suh."

"Do you know of any place near that we can obtain a vehicle in which we three can ride?"

"Well, dar's a fa'm house not quite a mile ahead—'deed, they calls it jes' fo' mile from dat house to Richmon'."

"Go up there. Bill, and get a conveyance and tell them

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we will pay them whatever price they ask," Virginia directed.

"Dunno, Miss, as dey'll want to git up in de middle de night to turn a kerrige ovah to a niggah like me," the driver replied.

"Well, let us walk as far as the house, then, father. Bill can lead the horses. You, yourself, can get a carriage or wagon there, I'm sure, when you tell the people who you are," Virginia urged.

Mr. Lee remonstrated but as there seemed no other way, the trio started forward. They had been so long delayed that the inmates of the farm house were already astir when they arrived. A few minutes sufficed to hitch the horses to an open wagon and the travellers were soon again on their way.

Already the day was dawning in the east and Virginia's heart sank as she remembered what the brightness heralded. "Can we reach Richmond before sunrise?" she asked the negro as he took his seat in front.

"I don' see how we kin, Miss. 'Twill kill de hosses sho."

"Never mind the horses," she replied impatiently. "I have jewels worth many times the value of this team and I will gladly give them all to you if you take us to Libby Prison before the rising of yonder sun."

Before she finished speaking they were off at a break-neck speed and still Bill did not spare the whip. On, on they flew, up hill and down hill, over good roads and bad.

"Faster, faster!" Virginia cried and, rising to his feet, Bill whipped the steeds into a mad gallop. Long streaks of light flashed up across the eastern sky, one by one the stars disappeared and the moon grew pale.

"Faster, faster!" Virginia again exclaimed, and now she was leaning forward with terror and despair in every

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lineament of her countenance. The horses, catching the spirit of their driver, had settled into a determined run as if they realized they had never raced before with steeds of equal swiftness.

"Go on, go on, we'll get there in time yet," Virginia cried in ecstasy as she saw the towers of Richmond gleaming in the distance, and the people stopped their morning work along the way to stare in astonishment, and wonder if master, mistress, man and horses had all gone mad.

Just before the first rays of the sun shot over the horizon, the horses turned into the prison street. Away in the distance, Virginia could discern a wagon with a crowd of men about it.

"Quick, quick, quick!" she shouted, "or we are too late."

Two minutes more of agonizing suspense and Bill was reining his horses, panting and covered with foam, in front of the prison. As he did so, the door opened slowly and Philip Blair stepped out, guarded on either side by coarse and brutal looking men.

"Thank God!" Virginia said, sinking back into her seat from sheer exhaustion when she saw that Philip was still alive.

Mr. Lee stepped quickly from the wagon, taking a strip of folded paper from his pocket. But Virginia was before him. Springing to the ground, she rushed past her father, past the astonished jailers who fell away before the very impetuosity of the charge, straight to the spot where Philip stood.

"You are safe, you are safe!" she cried, throwing her arms about him. "I have come back, as I told you I would, to save you from a horrible fate."

Then, turning, she held out her hand for the paper

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her father still held. With one arm resting across Philip's shoulder as if fearful she might yet be robbed of her victory, she read the order, triumphantly, defiantly, to the men.

A sullen silence prevailed among the guards who felt they had been cheated of a coveted treat. They were the rabble and vermin of the Confederacy and, like the execution fiends of Revolutionary France, they were drunk with sight of human blood and human misery and were incapable of delight save in the indulgence of their unnatural appetite.

"I don't believe it's genuine," the leader snarled.

"Look at it for yourself," Mr. Lee replied, taking the order and turning it toward the man for his perusal, though still retaining it in his own grasp.

"There's been foul play somewhere," the man complained.

"To be sure there has," Virginia interposed, "and it's been the cause of all this trouble. Now slink away to your lairs, you bloodthirsty curs. You are a shame and a disgrace to the fair name of the Confederacy. It is men such as you that have robbed her of her right to exist. Heaven spurns a nation that can cherish such fiends in its bosom. But for men like General Lee, we should deserve no better fate than to be wiped bodily from the earth to give place to a worthier people. But for General Lee, you would this day have committed murder, vile, base, malicious murder. But you have been cheated of your prey, for he is mine, all mine. I have rescued him from your infamous clutches."

Again she turned to Philip, who, regardless of her father, regardless of the gaping jailers, regardless even of that *Confederate officer* who stood like a phantom between them, clasped her in his arms and strained her

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joyfully, tenderly, gratefully to his heart. She had meant love, happiness, sweet sorrow to him before. She now meant life, liberty, honor, as well. And Virginia, who, through the long hours of anguish had shed no tear, showed the real womanliness of her nature by bursting into a flood of passionate weeping. Philip soothed and comforted her until she was calm, then led her past the stupefied captors to the wagon where Mr. Lee awaited them.

Philip looked about him as the wheels rattled over the rough stones, marvelling that it could be the same street into which he had looked from his prison window with such shrinking dread an hour before. He was turning to Virginia with these words on his lips when he noticed the pallor of the tired, worn face as he had not done before.

"You are ill, you look like death," he said, clasping her hand in alarm.

"I should have died, I verily believe, if we had been too late."

"Too late?" he said inquiringly.

"We have come from Petersburg and six miles beyond since dark last night," she replied.

"And all for me!"

"And all for you," she repeated. "But I should have counted the whole universe as nothing against you last night. Did you think we would not come?"

"I did at last," he answered sadly, oppressed even now by the recollection of those last hours in the prison cell.

"Did you doubt me, Philip?"

"Not for a moment. I knew you would come if it were in human power to do so."

Not until years after did he tell her of the weary watching through the long night, his spirit vacillating

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between hope and fear and, finally, as day began to dawn, yielding to the agonizing conviction that his doom was sealed. Within a few hours he must be on his way to Washington and the time was too short and too precious to be spent in gloomy reminiscences.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee urged him to remain with them until he had recovered from the effects of fasting and imprisonment, but he could not be persuaded. He had lost, already, many days of valuable time, he said, and he must be off at the earliest opportunity.

Virginia's heart had never ached before as it ached when Philip Blair was gone. This day and night of frantic agony had left its impress on her soul and had so incalculably strengthened her great affection for him that life without him stretched before her like a barren, dreary waste.

Hastily discharging his mission in the capital, Philip returned to General Sherman, who was still in Atlanta, and, having been promoted to the rank of Colonel, took his place at the head of his regiment for the long and eventful march to the sea and back again to Washington, glad of any work or hardship that occupied his mind and gave some aim and object to his present life.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

WITH what gratitude and satisfaction the lover of the national flag and the national honor finds himself, after years of wandering over southern battlefields, among the beloved scenes of the nation's capital. We may condole with the children of Dixie in their sorrows and their misfortunes, we may open our hearts to the genial influence of charity, but after all, there is in every loyal heart a sense of personal interest and personal ownership among the domes and spires of the time-honored city which no mere assemblage of buildings can inspire. What patriotic reflections, what historic memories, what thrilling aspirations. Fit monument, this, to commemorate the achievements of our first national hero—fitter than statue of bronze or marble obelisk or architectural pile of granite. A monumental city of beauty world-renowned. Not a mere material thing, but possessed of a soul that thinks, enjoys and suffers, made up of the teeming thousands of human intellects that yearly gather there from the four quarters of the globe, a vast intelligent entity.

Perish the thought that we should ever, for sordid considerations of convenience, remove the seat of government from this hallowed spot, lest such rending of the national heart-strings should prove but the "beginning of the end" of our national greatness; but rather, so long as the stars and stripes continue to wave "o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave," let us turn our eyes in patriotic devotion to this Mecca of our fatherland.

It is purely accidental that this tale, originally designed as a portrayal of the woes and trials of a southern girl

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in the days of the Rebellion, should lead us, even before the end of the strife, to the very fountain head of Federal principle and Federal power, but life is full of accidents, notwithstanding the oft-repeated maxim that "life is what we make it."

Through the persistent and energetic influence of Philip Blair, Hugh Cunningham was duly released from his confinement at Camp Morton. Under the care of faithful Jerry, who joined him in Indianapolis, he set out for Richmond. Before he had completed half the journey he was in a raging fever, brought on by excitement and fatigue. When he reached Washington, he was compelled to yield to Jerry's entreaties and tarry in that city a few days, as he expressed it, until he should recover from the fever and gain sufficient strength to continue southward.

The "few days" grew into weeks and even into months and still Hugh lay in hopeless pain and weariness upon his bed, now better for a day or two, now suffering from chills and parched with fever. During all this time he was completely lost from his friends and they from him. He had heard nothing from Virginia since Colonel Chester's death, although he had repeatedly written to her, addressing his letters to Atlanta. They, like the brief messages and notes of inquiry Virginia had sent to Camp Morton, were lost in the all-engulfing upheaval of the times.

At last, in mid-winter, Hugh, giving up all hope of reaching Richmond before spring, wrote to Mr. Lee, apprising him of his presence in Washington and the uncertain condition of his health.

"Poor Hugh!" Kittie cried when the letter was read in the little sitting-room at Richmond, "it is pitiful for him to be there all alone. Someone should go to him

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at once," and as she spoke she glanced hesitatingly at her cousin.

Mrs. Lee, too, looked with a half-questioning, half-pitying air at Virginia, over whose countenance there passed a perceptible shadow as she continued for a moment to work at her embroidery; otherwise she gave no sign of the fierce contest going on in her bosom. She had believed she was decided, if not resigned, as to her future course, but now the crucial test had come, the flesh was very weak; she found herself quite unprepared for so great a sacrifice. She was conscious of the inquiring glances and painfully aware of the awkward pause which followed Kittie's remark. She knew they were simply waiting to hear what she had to say. Dropping her hands into her lap, she looked at her mother helplessly and said:

"Mother, I suppose you and I should go to Hugh and take care of him until he is well enough to bring him home with us, don't you?" Her lips quivered but she set her teeth firmly together to keep back the tears and crush the lump that *would* rise in her throat. As to the ache in her heart, that didn't matter, she had grown used to that and it, at least, could not be seen by others.

"Can you do it?" her mother asked kindly.

"Yes, I can do it," she replied. "He has no one else, you know."

"Do you think we can get to Washington now, Thomas?" Mrs. Lee asked her husband.

"Yes, it can be managed if you think it advisable," Mr. Lee said with an air of uncertainty. "Do you realize, daughter, what you are doing? Such a course will commit you irrevocably to the present arrangement between you and Hugh." None knew what Virginia suffered as her father knew, for he alone had been with her through

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all the circumstances attending the imprisonment and release of Philip Blair. While he deplored her infatuation for the Federal captain, yet he now saw her entanglement with Hugh in a different light from that in which he viewed it on that August morning when he had passively allowed her to become engaged to Hugh, and it pained him to see her voluntarily sacrificing the happiness of her life.

"I am irrevocably committed already to the present arrangement," she replied. "It is right for us to go to Hugh and we must do it."

* * * * *

Virginia expected to find Hugh changed but she was wholly unprepared for what she saw when she reached his side.

"Poor Hugh!" she said with ineffable sympathy in her voice as she took his wasted hand in hers. Was it possible, she thought, this total wreck could be the elegant Captain Cunningham, her playmate in childhood, her lifelong friend, her lover——"

Ah! her heart misgave her there and, dropping the hand she held, she buried her face in her own and wept bitterly. How gladly she could stand by Hugh and minister to his comfort and happiness in the capacity of a friend, but as a lover! Her soul revolted at the thought. The very frailty and weakness that would have won an infinite tenderness from a heart that really loved Hugh, only served to embitter the tie already so galling to Virginia's spirit. She tried to force herself to bestow some semblance of a caress upon him but she could not. All day as she moved noiselessly about the room, performing little acts of kindness for the sufferer, the image of Philip Blair walked by her side, robust, strong and admirable, in shocking contrast with the ema-

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ciation and helplessness before her. Her face grew pale and haggard under the long strain of suppressed emotion and when, at night, she was alone in her chamber, she fell upon her knees beside the bed and gave way to the storm of passionate weeping that had been brewing all day.

"I cannot do it! I cannot do it!" she cried piteously. "It is too hard and it is cruel to ask it of me."

Recalled to calmer judgment by the unreasonableness of the cry, she reflected that her constancy to her promise was purely a determination of her own; no one was urging her to such a course; yet chains and fetters could not have bound her more hopelessly than did this tie of honor. Her mind went back to the days before the war when Hugh was full of life and vigor, and even to the summer after Gettysburg when he had come to Lee's Summit, the gentleman and soldier *par excellence* in the eyes of the world; and then she thought of the piti-able object in the room below and told herself that she had been responsible for the change. It were a shame and a dishonor to desert him now, she reasoned, and she could never do it, though her heart should break in being faithful.

"O, God, strengthen me to bear this trial and help me to do right!" she prayed again and again in agony, and the balm which heaven has for those who weep was poured upon her suffering spirit.

In the morning she returned to her station beside the invalid's bedside with a resignation surprising to herself. With a deft hand she straightened the covers on his bed, patted the pillows to make them more comfortable, and, stooping down, lightly imprinted a kiss on the pale, wan forehead. Hugh looked up at her in glad surprise and, without a word of comment, clasped the hand that lay

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upon the pillow and pressed it to his lips. It was Virginia's sin offering for the wrong she had done Hugh and it calmed her spirit and strengthened her for the endurance of her secret burden.

Day after day as winter passed and spring advanced, she took up the weary weight of care, sitting by Hugh, waiting on him, reading to him, talking with him, doing anything that seemed to suit his mood or served to while away the tedious hours. Somewhere in the house an old guitar was unearthed and at times she sang to him the old, sweet songs of home; but this she did only upon rare occasions and at Hugh's request, for the sound of the guitar and the words and melody of the songs awoke such memories of the olden days when she was free that an evening thus spent was always followed by days and nights of restless, chafing discontent.

Mrs. Lee was vaguely conscious of her daughter's struggle and she strove to help her by relieving her as often as possible of her duties in the sick room.

The arrival of the Chesters in March was a pleasant diversion for which Virginia was most grateful. When the capture of Richmond and the fall of the Confederacy became imminent, Mr. Lee thought it advisable for his own family to remain in Washington and for his sister-in-law and her daughter to join them there, that they might avoid the annoyance and danger attendant upon the closing scenes of the war.

A house was taken in a quiet street and the four ladies with Hugh and Jerry and a maid were soon established in it. Their only source of anxiety now was for the safety of Mr. Lee. He had stood high as a supporter of the Confederate government and there was much uncertainty as to what the fate of such men would be when the end came.

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Kittie, with her bright face and cheery manner, was the life of the household and soon won laurels by the aptness with which she learned to wait upon Hugh, who was beginning to sit propped up with pillows in an easy chair a part of every day.

"Why is it, Kittie," he said to her one morning. "that you can smooth a pillow or adjust a footstool so much more comfortably than any of the others?"

Kittie blushed and shook her pretty curls with a smile of real happiness as she said, "You are a designing flatterer, sir, and hope to inveigle me by your wiles into keeping this thing up after you are well enough to wait on yourself!" and forthwith she proceeded to lower an open window and tuck the wraps more closely about the invalid's neck lest the cool draft might undo the good accomplished by weeks of constant care.

As she bent over him, Hugh put out his hand and lifted a long soft curl that fell upon his shoulder, looking into the brown eyes with a smile as the tress of hair clung lovingly about his finger. It was a familiarity he could not have thought of venturing upon with Virginia, but this was only Kittie—little Kittie, with whom, as a collegiate, he had frolicked while yet she was "in short skirts and pinafores."

But why had Kittie this sleight of hand which her elders could not imitate? Why, indeed! It is one of those occult mysteries that we shall never fathom until, in the unseen world, a higher order of intelligence shall teach us what is life and what is love.

This peaceful home life was in marked contrast with the important events occurring in the outside world. Sherman was completing that famous march which, for brilliancy, audacity and success as a military achievement, cannot be paralleled in history; the Confederate govern-

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ment had taken its flight to the south, Lee had surrendered the Army of Virginia to the commander-in-chief of the Union army, Richmond had been burned, and the national President had been murdered. The magnificent tragedy of four long years had reached a sudden and unexpected climax. The prince of dramatists could not design a culmination more startling and sublime.

With the assassination of President Lincoln, the curtain fell on what seemed to be the closing scene of the Civil War, but it rises yet once more for the *grande finale* of the play—that marvellous review of troops in the Capital city, witnessed by the President and his cabinet, by Congress and the people, and by the ambassadors and representatives of every court in Europe and every civilized nation of the Orient. The spectators gazed with amazement and admiration at the veteran warriors who passed before them by thousands and by tens of thousands in martial dignity and splendor. “*Why* did we not know of this before?” a prominent southern woman exclaimed aloud as she stood spellbound by the magnificent display, while foreign dignitaries carried back to their own lands a new impression of the importance and power of the Great Republic.

Among all the throng that crowded every foot of standing room along the avenues appointed for this last parade, no one was more important than our old friend Jerry—in Jerry’s estimation. His long residence in Indianapolis and Washington had greatly enhanced his ideas of the rights and privileges of a “cullahed gentleman” and, save for his devotion to his “Marse Hugh,” his sympathy and allegiance were being rapidly transferred to the principles and institutions of the North. The pomp and grandeur of the present occasion did much

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to confirm him in this tendency, for Jerry was one of that very large class of people who always cast their lot with the winning side.

In his enthusiasm he had tarried rather longer upon the streets than he intended and he was making his way through the crowd with much haste when he was accosted by a voice that sounded strangely familiar:

"Hello, there, Sambo! Where'd you turn up from? I s'pose you come to your senses an' cut the 'quaintance of that dear 'Marse Hugh' o' yours, did you?"

Jerry looked at the speaker for a moment trying to recall where he had seen him before and then exclaimed:

"Now I has ye! You one de men dat hepped me fetch Marse Hugh round aftah Gettysbu'g. Hope t' die if evah I fo'git a fren like dat. But my name's not Sambo, I tol' you dat in Pennsylvany. It's Jerry Cunnam, please, suh," the negro answered with a great show of dignity.

"O, yes, I believe you did make some such correction as that at Gettysburg. Well, then, Jerry, tell me, have you asserted your right as a free man an' left your master to black his own boots and curry his own horse?"

"Well, I's thankful to say I's a free man, suh," Jerry replied pompously, "but I's a workin' fo' Marse Hugh same's evah an' he's a payin' me my wages."

"He is, eh? Where've you been all this time?"

"Mos' de time I's made my home in Injunaplis, suh, whar I had full cha'ge o' my Marse Hugh's income while he was in de prison, an' I managed it so well dat he come out mos' as rich as ol' Marse Cunnam hisself, I guess."

"Why are you here now?"

"We's a waitin' on Marse Hugh. He's sick an' we can't leave heah till he gits well 'nuf to be moved."

"Sick, is he? Where's he stayin'? I may want to

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come 'round an' see 'im if I stay here long, for old acquaintance sake—and to see how his pulse beats over the result of the war. Great display we've had here to-day."

"You right dar, suh," Jerry answered, "an' Marse Hugh be glad t' see you, I kin promise. 'Bout dat wah business, he's been sick too long to be vexin' hisself much 'bout dat one way or 'nother."

Upon this Jerry hurried on toward home and Tom Healy dropped into a restaurant near by where he had an appointment with two or three boon companions. They ate their supper together and discussed, meanwhile, the question of going south to invest their small stock of surplus capital in cheap lands. The scheme had been in Tom's mind for a long while and each time he talked the matter over with his friends it grew in favor with him. On this particular evening he was aroused to an unusual interest and at an early hour he set out to find "Mister Philip" and consult him, which he had already done, how many times he was ashamed to say.

"Hello, Tom," Philip said as Tom entered the room.

"Hello, Mister Philip. I've come to trouble you again about that same old question of goin' south," Tom said.

"All right, old boy. What have you to say this time?" Blair asked.

"Well, I've a mind to do it, sir. I believe it's the only thing for a fellow like me with plenty o' health an' strength an' only a little money."

"Remember, Tom, you know nothing about the south and the kind of work to be done there."

"But I hope I'm not too old a dog to learn new tricks yet, Mister Philip."

"No, no, Tom, you're not too old to learn but there'll be many disadvantages. You'll be a sort of stray—a

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Union soldier in the south will be like a sheep among wolves, so to speak, for a few years, I'm afraid."

"I know, but I have yet to find the people I can't live among, an' some o' the other boys talks o' goin' too. You see, it's this way, Mister Philip, we can get a good-sized farm down there for the money we've got an' it wouldn't buy enough ground to make a pocket han'kerchief back in N'York state."

"O, of course your plan has its advantages and maybe your idea is the best, after all. We'll miss you in Rochester, though, Tom."

"Now, Mister Philip, you're talkin'. It's the tearin' myself away from there that hurts an' it's my reason for goin' direct to the south from here. I've been, in a manner, weaned, in the four years I've been away, an' 'twill be easier to go back from here than it would from Rochester."

"The South is large, Tom, and means a great deal. Have you decided upon a location?"

"Not for certain," Tom replied. "I've thought some of Alabamy or Georgy an' then agin of Virginny. That wouldn't be so far away, you know."

"Virginia is a fine old state, Tom—none finer if it hadn't seceded."

"An' I know the very man to talk to about it," Tom exclaimed as if suddenly impressed with a new idea. "You remember the rebel captain we helped take care of after the battle of Gettysburg, don't you?"

"Yes," Philip replied with fresh interest. "What of him?"

"Wasn't he a Virginian?"

"No, Tom. He's the man we saw at Lee's Summit when we were down there the year before the war, don't you

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remember? The one the little brown-eyed girl, Kittie Chester, was so fond of?" Blair replied.

"Well, anyway, he's here in Washington, at Number — on — street," Tom said, consulting his memorandum of the address, "and I'll see him and find out all I can about Virginny. He can tell me more than any northern man, I suppose."

"I wonder how it happens he is here," Blair said musingly. "He was in a sad state when I saw him last. I didn't tell you about finding him in the prison in Indiana, did I?"

"No, sir, I never heard of him again after we left him in Pennsylvania," Healy replied.

Philip told Tom briefly of his meeting with Cunningham at Camp Morton and of his own successful effort to procure Hugh's release at the next exchange of prisoners, adding as he finished, "It would be a very good thing to talk with him about your plan, Tom. He may give you some useful information. I remember he was four years at William and Mary. I wonder if he ever got well."

"No, he's sick now," Tom replied. "I saw his black man, Jerry, to-day an' he said he was waitin' here for his Marse Hugh to get well enough to be moved south."

"From the way he looked when I saw him, I'm afraid he hasn't a very bright prospect. I'll go to see him myself if I have time."

"I'll be goin' now, I guess, but I'll be seein' you about this again soon if I ain't botherin' you too much," Tom said, rising to take his leave.

"Not at all, Tom, not at all," Philip said cordially. "I am as anxious as you are that you should do the right thing and get yourself satisfactorily located."

"Thank you, Mister Philip, you are very kind to say so," Tom said, wishing Blair good-night.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

HUGH's health improved rapidly with the advent of the warm spring days and plans began to be laid for going home.

Mr. Lee went direct to Tennessee from Richmond and with characteristic energy and expedition pushed the preparations for the reception of his family. A neat and comfortable little dwelling was erected for the Hudsons who were to remain on the place, and the Lodge was repaired and enlarged for the use of the Lees themselves until such time as they could afford to rebuild the "great house."

In the meantime, the former slaves who were on the place or were scattered about in the immediate vicinity, were collected and set to work in the fields and in a few weeks evidences of thrift and prosperity were apparent on every hand.

Much eagerness was felt by the little band of exiles in Washington to be among the scenes of home once more, but they tried to make themselves contented until word should come from Mr. Lee that he was ready to receive them.

One morning while they were thus waiting, Virginia sat alone with Hugh, reading sketches here and there from an old volume of Shelley she had picked up. Turning a page listlessly as Hugh finished a comment on some striking sentiment, she began—

"Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep,
He hath awakened from the dream of life"—

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A flood of memories swept over her, she heard again the gentle tones of Philip's voice and saw the tender sympathy in his grave and manly face. And he was gone out of her life forever!

Tears filled her eyes, a sob rose in her throat and choked her utterance. Dropping the book, she covered her face with her hands lest Hugh should see and understand the bitterness in her heart.

"You are a strange girl, Virginia," Hugh said helplessly. "At home I used to think I understood you perfectly but here in Washington you are an enigma to me nearly all the time."

Virginia dried her eyes as quickly as she could and opened her lips to reply just as Jerry appeared at the door and announced with a sweeping bow:

"A gemman to see Marse Hugh."

A moment more and Philip Blair had stepped across the threshold.

"Virginia!" he exclaimed in accents that could not be mistaken.

Paler and colder than marble, the young girl sat staring at the visitor, powerless to speak or move. Then suddenly recalling herself, she arose in painful embarrassment, a vivid blush succeeding her pallor, and advanced to take the proffered hand.

"Why have you come here?" were the only words she could formulate.

Philip saw and partially understood her distress and sought to alleviate it by an assumed indifference.

"I came to visit Captain Cunningham," he replied, turning to Hugh, "and right glad I am to find him in happier surroundings than when I saw him last."

"Where have you seen him?" Virginia gasped in astonishment.

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"Colonel Blair has twice preserved my life, Virginia," Hugh answered as he grasped Blair's hand, "once in rescuing me after Gettysburg and again in procuring my release from prison."

Hugh looked searchingly at Virginia's face. Could it be that here was a revelation? He had heard briefly and incidentally of Philip Blair's connection with the Lees and Chesters, but as it was a subject of which Virginia never spoke and which the other members of the family instinctively avoided in his presence or hers, he knew very little of the real nature of this association. He had been at a loss to understand her emotion and embarrassment at the appearance of the visitor but had hastily attributed it to her annoyance at being found in tears. Was it possible there was a graver explanation for the fitfulness and discontent she had displayed since coming to him in Washington? All this went through his mind upon the instant, while Virginia, unable to regain her self-possession, hurried from the room, leaving the two men alone together.

Hugh looked questioningly at Philip as the door closed after his fiancée.

"What is Virginia Lee to you?" he asked.

"She is the noblest woman I ever met and my best friend," Philip answered gravely and frankly. "What is she to you?"

"She is my promised wife."

The words pierced Philip like a knife and he gave a start of painful surprise, but he checked the expression of astonishment that rose to his lips lest he might wound Hugh, and said with fervor:

"You're a fortunate man, Cunningham. Such a blessing is compensation for worse ills than even you have suffered."

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Hugh watched the speaker narrowly and many things passed through his mind, but he must have time to think before he spoke, so, making no direct reply to Philip's words, he turned the conversation to another channel and an hour or more passed very pleasantly.

Philip longed to see Virginia's face again but as the morning wore away and she did not return, he was too well bred to protract his stay immoderately, even in the hope of gratifying such a desire.

"I am tarrying much too long," he said at length, rising to take his leave.

"You will come again?" Hugh asked with much interest.

"Perhaps not," was the reply. "I hope to go home within a few days and I have many things to do before I leave."

"Where are you staying?" Hugh inquired. "We'd all be glad to have a more substantial visit from you."

"You are very kind," Philip answered, mentioning his address, half hoping he might be asked to come again.

When his guest was gone, Hugh stretched himself on a couch and lay for a long time with his hands clasped behind his head, gazing intently at the ceiling and thinking, thinking, thinking.

He believed he had found a clew to Virginia's strange demeanor. She had never really loved him, that he had always known, and since she came to Washington he had sometimes been convinced she never would love him as he wished her to. She had been attentive and kind, considering his comfort and welfare before her own always, and he had appreciated the self-denial she had shown, but there was something lacking in her manner toward him that hurt him cruelly; it was, as if a great barrier had risen between them that neither of them could

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ever pass. Sometimes he had, himself, almost grown tired of the restraint and had turned with a feeling of relief to the cheery air of freedom which Kittie always brought to his bedside. And *this* was why she was restless and absent-minded, *this* was the secret of her pale, worn face.

"That's it," he said softly to himself. "I have found her out. She has had a weary burden all these months."

He knew now why she had seemed to avoid his touch and to shrink from his caresses; it was not mere maidenly reserve but an uncontrollable aversion to his demonstrations of affection. She had tried to remain faithful to her promise, tried to do her duty, while all the time her heart was breaking. He thought of her, too, as a little girl, and as he had loved her in her early womanhood, and groaned aloud at the thought of giving her up forever.

"But better that than yoked for a lifetime to an unloving wife!" he muttered.

Virginia had purposely remained away as long as she could find excuse, hoping Hugh would forget her agitation at Philip Blair's appearance.

"Come here, Virginia, and sit by me, I have something to say to you," Hugh said, drawing a chair to his side when she entered the room. Virginia took the chair indicated, almost hearing her own heart beat as a premonition of what he had to say forced itself upon her. She ventured no reply but patiently waited for him to proceed.

"Tell me all about your association with Philip Blair," he said in a tone of command he had never used toward her before.

"There is not much to tell," she answered. "He was with us at Chattanooga, he was kind to us during our mis-

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fortunes in Atlanta, and he came with us almost to Richmond. There he was arrested and condemned as a spy and would have been hanged if father and I had not obtained his release from General Lee."

"That sounds simple enough," Hugh said musingly. "What was your association with him in Chattanooga?"

Virginia briefly recounted her meeting with Philip on the day the Federal soldiers took possession of their home.

"When did you meet him again?"

Virginia related her experience at the Federal camp and Philip's part in the encounter.

"Where did you next see him?" Hugh asked.

"Well, after Tom Healy, as you know, was wounded and brought to Lee's Summit, I saw him often, of course."

"How often? Every day?"

"Almost every day, I think."

"For how long?"

"Three weeks or more."

"How long was it from the time you went to Atlanta until he reached there?"

"O, a long time, nine or ten months or more, I think," said Virginia.

"Did he write to you?"

"Once."

"Did you reply?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I had promised to marry you."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's what I thought. You are an honorable girl, Virginia."

"I don't just know, Hugh, whether you are earnest

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or ironical, but I have tried to be honorable," Virginia replied.

"I was never more in earnest in my life," Hugh said, watching Virginia narrowly. "Tell me about the first time you saw Blair in Atlanta."

Virginia told of the invasion of the Chester home by Painter and his gang and Blair's interference. In her enthusiasm she forgot the restraint she had before placed upon her manner; her face glowed with animation as she recalled the details of the exciting scene.

"Virginia, does Philip Blair love you?" Hugh interrupted suddenly, not for a moment allowing his eyes to wander from her face, from which the blood receded and she grew ashy pale.

"How should I know that?" she answered helplessly.

"Come, now, Virginia, we've groped about in the dark long enough. Let's come to a definite understanding. Do you *think* Blair loves you?"

"I have no right to judge what he thinks of me."

"Did he ever tell you he loved you?"

"Yes."

"That's right," Hugh replied. "When you answer like that I know what I'm doing. But I have a harder question yet, Virginia. *Do you love Blair?*"

"You have no right to catechise me so, and I shall not submit to it any longer," she exclaimed, springing up to leave him, but he caught her hand and held it firmly while he said:

"Who has a better right, Virginia? Does it not involve the happiness of my own life as well as yours?"

"But I thought I could forget him in time, Hugh, and I never meant that you should know. Oh! why did Philip Blair come here to-day?"

"It is the Hand Divine, Virginia, I verily believe, which

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interferes to stop us when we meditate an infringement too great upon nature and nature's laws. Did you dream, dear girl, that I could wish you to make a sacrifice like that?"

"I scarcely gave myself a chance to think about it, Hugh. I only thought of you as you were before the war, in all the vigor of manhood, and looked at you as you lay here helpless and frail and sick, and nothing on earth could have induced me to tell you that I had been false to you in addition to all your other woes."

"You have not been false, Virginia. You've been the truest of the true, for you have tried to keep your promise when it was taking your very life to do it. It was I who was wrong to ask you to make that promise. I knew it at the time, but I had always loved you so, and I thought in time you would learn to love me in return."

"And I should have done so, Hugh, I honestly believe, if Philip hadn't come. Why, why did I ever do it when all the time he was fighting against the cause I loved so much."

"There, there, Virginia, no more of that. The war is done, let us not be fighting its battles over again. It is not surprising to me that you should love Philip Blair, he is a splendid type of manhood and a much better match for you than I could ever have been. You'll marry him, of course, and add your mite to help heal the breach between the North and the South."

"Why, Hugh, I shall probably never see him again, he knows I am to marry an officer in the Confederate army."

"Yes, you will see him again and you are not going to marry a Confederate officer. He is coming here at eight o'clock to-night and you must be looking your handsomest to receive him. Put on the pretty pink dress that I like so much—Philip will like it too."

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"Hugh, you are the very best fellow on earth," Virginia said, patting his hand impulsively, "and I love you just as I did long ago when we were children. Maybe after all we are making a mistake."

"No, no, Virginia, don't deceive yourself. It is because you are free from me that you imagine you love me just a little. Go now, and do what you please, and don't be grieving over me. I feel happier than I have for a long time, looking at your sorry face and wondering as to the cause."

When she was gone, he called Jerry and sent a note to Philip requesting him to call at eight o'clock on very important business. In a short time the negro returned with the message that Colonel Blair would be pleased to come at the appointed time.

Hugh was waiting in the little front parlor with Virginia when Philip arrived.

"Colonel Blair," Hugh said as he took the visitor's hand in greeting, "I am opposed to resting under obligation to anyone. I owe you a debt of gratitude such as one man seldom owes another. In giving you Virginia Lee to-night, I feel that I have discharged my obligation in full."

The words fell like a thunderbolt upon both hearers. Virginia had not dreamed of Hugh's intention and her face flushed crimson with the thought that Philip might, after all, have changed his mind.

"Are you in earnest, Cunningham, or what can you mean?" Philip asked incredulously.

"I mean what I say," Hugh answered. "No man has a right to stand between two hearts that truly love each other. Take her, Blair, she is yours. May God deal with you as you deal with our Virginia Lee."

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In a moment more he was gone. Philip turned to Virginia.

"Is it true, little woman, and will you come to me?" he said, holding out his arms to her.

"Do you want me, Philip?" she asked eagerly.

"Want you!" he exclaimed. "Would life be worth the living without you, having known you? Now, will you come?"

Virginia glided into the outstretched arms and Philip, clasping her closely to his heart, said fondly, "Now, little woman, you are mine—all mine."

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CHAPTER XXX.

It seems disgustingly of the earth earthy that Hugh Cunningham should go on growing stronger day by day and eating ravenously of the tempting dishes Mrs. Lee provided for him. Following the precedent of disappointed lovers of olden days, he should at least have lost interest in the ordinary affairs of life and entered a monastery or gone in search of the Holy Grail.

In marked contrast with such a course, he was in a measure beguiled from his despondency while yet the lovers were enjoying the first hours of their unexpected happiness. It had really cost him a greater pang than he himself anticipated when the moment came to relinquish Virginia to his rival and for a long while he sat musing dejectedly, alone in the gathering darkness. At last he was aroused by a cheery voice asking, "May I come in?" as Kittie's rosy face peeped at him from the hall.

"Surely you may, Kittie. I'm needing consolation sadly now."

Kittie smiled but made no comment and, drawing up a little stool, seated herself by his side and began a spirited recital of an experience she had had in the city that afternoon. Hugh was so charmed by the bright face and merry voice and manner that he almost forgot, for the time, the sacrifice he had so recently made.

At Lee's Summit, too, Virginia was busy through the long summer days with work that had no interest for Hugh, and it was Kittie who drove the little phaeton when he went for an airing on the country roads and Kittie who accommodated her bounding step to his slower gait when he walked upon the hillside. She had so entwined

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herself into his heart that he had no feeling of regret or bitterness when October came and, with it, the northern soldier to claim his southern bride.

In the little summer house Philip and Virginia renewed in happier strain the vows of love and faithfulness that had once been here renounced in anguish and despair. In the sitting-room of the Lodge, with only the Hudsons, the Chesters, Hugh, and Virginia's parents as witnesses, their troth was solemnly and fervently plighted.

"Aren't they splendid?" Kittie exclaimed aloud as the last words were pronounced, and she did but echo the thought of every one who looked into the happy faces of Philip and Virginia Blair.

One sacred memento Virginia took with her from the sunny south to her northern home in Rochester—faithful Webster, who took great pride in himself as the representative of the dignity and decorum of the southern butler and who, years after, told marvellous tales of the greatness of the south "befo' de wa'" to Philip and Virginia's children, never quite satisfying the little tyrants unless he finished with the story about "papa and mamma at the Union camp," which, by the way, as the years went by, received many embellishments from the vivid imagination of the negro's brain.

Mrs. Chester and Kittie had made all their arrangements to return to Atlanta soon after Virginia's marriage and Hugh, who began with the cool days of autumn to be bothered by the old annoying cough, had been persuaded to remain at Lee's Summit during the winter months, that, under Mrs. Lee's care, he might escape a renewal of the old malady. But Hugh could not let Kittie go. The days would be too long and dreary without her sunny presence in the house. He had meant to wait until spring to tell her of his love, lest he should seem

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fickle and shallow after his lifelong attachment to her cousin, but the prospect of a long and lonely winter was too desolate to be contemplated.

"Kittie," he said to her a day or two before she was to leave, "would you rather go with your mother to Atlanta or go with a poor sick fellow like I am to Europe for the winter?"

"Why, Hugh, I don't know what you mean!" she answered, a blush spreading quickly over her face.

"I mean, Kittie, that I cannot do without you, and I've been thinking for several days that if I could persuade you, we'd go this winter and stay with father in the south of Europe somewhere until I am strong again and then return to do whatever may seem best. Will you do it, Kittie? I love you fondly, little one, no matter how unreasonable it may seem, and I want you with me. Will you go?" he asked, turning the sweet face to his that he might read the thoughts written there.

She raised her brown eyes full of the tenderness that Kittie could never hide. "Do you think you really love me, Hugh?" she asked in a childish tone.

"I really love you, Kittie, and I am happier by far with you than I ever was with Virginia since we were little children. And you, Kittie, do you think you could love a miserable invalid like I am?"

"I have loved you all my life, Hugh!" she answered, tenderly.

And so the plans were changed. Within another month Hugh and Kittie were married and gone away, and Mrs. Chester, instead of Hugh, remained at the Lodge with Mr. and Mrs. Lee.

In the spring the wanderers returned. A week they spent with Philip and Virginia in New York, then stopped at Lee's Summit for a few days after which, with Mrs.

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Chester, they went to Atlanta, where Hugh, now grown strong and well, took up Mr. Chester's business, proving himself an efficient factor in the regeneration of the South. Mr. Cunningham remained in the North where his real sympathies had always been, while Jerry took Sallie from Tennessee and went to live with Hugh and Kittie in their Georgia home.

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